

Inglis (SC)	Mica	Saxton
Issa	Miller (FL)	Schmidt
Johnson (IL)	Miller (MI)	Sensenbrenner
Johnson, Sam	Miller, Gary	Sessions
Jones (NC)	Moran (KS)	Shadegg
Jordan	Murphy, Tim	Shays
Keller	Musgrave	Shimkus
King (IA)	Myrick	Shuster
King (NY)	Neugebauer	Simpson
Kingston	Nunes	Smith (NE)
Kirk	Paul	Smith (NJ)
Kline (MN)	Pearce	Smith (TX)
Knollenberg	Pence	Souder
Kuhl (NY)	Peterson (PA)	Stearns
LaHood	Petri	Tancredo
Lamborn	Pitts	Terry
Latham	Platts	Thornberry
LaTourette	Poe	Tiahrt
Lewis (CA)	Porter	Tiberi
Lewis (KY)	Price (GA)	Turner
Linder	Putnam	Upton
LoBiondo	Radanovich	Walberg
Lucas	Ramstad	Walden (OR)
Lungren, Daniel	Regula	Walsh (NY)
E.	Rehberg	Wamp
Mack	Reichert	Weldon (FL)
Manzullo	Renzi	Weller
Marchant	Reynolds	Westmoreland
McCarthy (CA)	Rogers (AL)	Whitfield
McCauley (TX)	Rogers (KY)	Wicker
McCotter	Rogers (MI)	Wilson (NM)
McCrery	Rohrabacher	Wilson (SC)
McHenry	Ros-Lehtinen	Wolf
McHugh	Roskam	Young (AK)
McKeon	Royce	Young (FL)
McMorris	Ryan (WI)	
Rodgers	Sali	

NOT VOTING—17

Barrett (SC)	Delahunt	Perlmuter
Boswell	Dingell	Pickering
Carson	Jindal	Pryce (OH)
Cleaver	Larson (CT)	Sullivan
Cubin	Lee	Visclosky
Davis, Jo Ann	Melancon	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Two minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1218

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3246.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SERRANO). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2007

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 704, I call up the bill (H.R. 3246) to amend title 40, United States Code, to provide a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely economically distressed regions in the Nation, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3246

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

- (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—
- (1) certain regions of the Nation, including Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta Region, the Northern Great Plains Region, the Southeast Crescent Region, the Southwest Border Region, the Northern Border Region, and rural Alaska, have suffered from chronic distress far above the national average;
 - (2) an economically distressed region can suffer unemployment and poverty at a rate that is 150 percent of the national average; and
 - (3) regional commissions are unique Federal-State partnerships that can provide targeted resources to alleviate pervasive economic distress.
- (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are—
- (1) to provide a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely economically distressed regions in the Nation; and
 - (2) to ensure that the most severely economically distressed regions in the Nation have the necessary tools to develop the basic building blocks for economic development, such as transportation and basic public infrastructure, job skills training, and business development.

SEC. 3. REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT.

- (a) IN GENERAL.—Title 40, United States Code, is amended—
- (1) by redesignating subtitle V as subtitle VI; and
 - (2) by inserting after subtitle IV the following:

“Subtitle V—Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development

Chapter	Sec.
“151. GENERAL PROVISIONS	15101
“153. REGIONAL COMMISSIONS	15301
“155. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	15501
“157. ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS	15701
“CHAPTER 151—GENERAL PROVISIONS	

- “Sec.
“15101. Definitions.

“§ 15101. Definitions.
“In this subtitle, the following definitions apply:

“(1) COMMISSION.—The term ‘Commission’ means a Commission established under section 15301.

“(2) LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT.—The term ‘local development district’ means an entity that—

“(A)(i) is an economic development district that is—

“(I) in existence on the date of enactment of this chapter; and

“(II) located in the region; or

“(i) if an entity described in clause (i) does not exist—

“(I) is organized and operated in a manner that ensures broad-based community participation and an effective opportunity for local officials, community leaders, and the public to contribute to the development and implementation of programs in the region;

“(II) is governed by a policy board with at least a simple majority of members consisting of—

“(aa) elected officials; or

“(bb) designees or employees of a general purpose unit of local government that have

been appointed to represent the unit of local government; and

“(III) is certified by the Governor or appropriate State officer as having a charter or authority that includes the economic development of counties, portions of counties, or other political subdivisions within the region; and

“(B) has not, as certified by the Federal Cochairperson—

“(i) inappropriately used Federal grant funds from any Federal source; or

“(ii) appointed an officer who, during the period in which another entity inappropriately used Federal grant funds from any Federal source, was an officer of the other entity.

“(3) FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAM.—The term ‘Federal grant program’ means a Federal grant program to provide assistance in carrying out economic and community development activities.

“(4) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term ‘Indian tribe’ has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b).

“(5) NONPROFIT ENTITY.—The term ‘nonprofit entity’ means any entity with tax-exempt or nonprofit status, as defined by the Internal Revenue Service, that has been formed for the purpose of economic development.

“(6) REGION.—The term ‘region’ means the area covered by a Commission as described in subchapter II of chapter 157.

“CHAPTER 153—REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

“Sec.

“15301. Establishment, membership, and employees.

“15302. Decisions.

“15303. Functions.

“15304. Administrative powers and expenses.

“15305. Meetings.

“15306. Personal financial interests.

“15307. Tribal representation on Northern Great Plains Regional Commission.

“15308. Tribal participation.

“15309. Annual report.

“§ 15301. Establishment, membership, and employees

“(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There are established the following regional Commissions:

“(1) The Delta Regional Commission.

“(2) The Northern Great Plains Regional Commission.

“(3) The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission.

“(4) The Southwest Border Regional Commission.

“(5) The Northern Border Regional Commission.

“(b) MEMBERSHIP.—

“(1) FEDERAL AND STATE MEMBERS.—Each Commission shall be composed of the following members:

“(A) A Federal Cochairperson, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

“(B) The Governor of each participating State in the region of the Commission.

“(2) ALTERNATE MEMBERS.—

“(A) ALTERNATE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON.—The President shall appoint an alternate Federal Cochairperson for each Commission. The alternate Federal Cochairperson, when not actively serving as an alternate for the Federal Cochairperson, shall perform such functions and duties as are delegated by the Federal Cochairperson.

“(B) STATE ALTERNATES.—The State member of a participating State may have a single alternate, who shall be appointed by the Governor of the State from among the members of the Governor’s cabinet or personal staff.

“(C) VOTING.—An alternate member shall vote in the case of the absence, death, disability, removal, or resignation of the Federal or State member for which the alternate member is an alternate.

“(3) COCHAIRPERSONS.—A Commission shall be headed by—

“(A) the Federal Cochairperson, who shall serve as a liaison between the Federal Government and the Commission; and

“(B) a State Cochairperson, who shall be a Governor of a participating State in the region and shall be elected by the State members for a term of not less than 1 year.

“(4) CONSECUTIVE TERMS.—A State member may not be elected to serve as State Cochairperson for more than 2 consecutive terms.

“(c) COMPENSATION.—

“(1) FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSONS.—Each Federal Cochairperson shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level III of the Executive Schedule as set out in section 5314 of title 5.

“(2) ALTERNATE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSONS.—Each Federal Cochairperson's alternate shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level V of the Executive Schedule as set out in section 5316 of title 5.

“(3) STATE MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES.—Each State member and alternate shall be compensated by the State that they represent at the rate established by the laws of that State.

“(d) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND STAFF.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A Commission shall appoint and fix the compensation of an executive director and such other personnel as are necessary to enable the Commission to carry out its duties. Compensation under this paragraph may not exceed the maximum rate of basic pay established for the Senior Executive Service under section 5382 of title 5, including any applicable locality-based comparability payment that may be authorized under section 5304(h)(2)(C) of that title.

“(2) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.—The executive director shall be responsible for carrying out the administrative duties of the Commission, directing the Commission staff, and such other duties as the Commission may assign.

“(e) NO FEDERAL EMPLOYEE STATUS.—No member, alternate, officer, or employee of a Commission (other than the Federal Cochairperson, the alternate Federal Cochairperson, staff of the Federal Cochairperson, and any Federal employee detailed to the Commission) shall be considered to be a Federal employee for any purpose.

“§ 15302. Decisions

“(a) REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROVAL.—Except as provided in section 15304(c)(3), decisions by the Commission shall require the affirmative vote of the Federal Cochairperson and a majority of the State members (exclusive of members representing States delinquent under section 15304(c)(3)(C)).

“(b) CONSULTATION.—In matters coming before the Commission, the Federal Cochairperson shall, to the extent practicable, consult with the Federal departments and agencies having an interest in the subject matter.

“(c) QUORUMS.—A Commission shall determine what constitutes a quorum for Commission meetings; except that—

“(1) any quorum shall include the Federal Cochairperson or the alternate Federal Cochairperson; and

“(2) a State alternate member shall not be counted toward the establishment of a quorum.

“(d) PROJECTS AND GRANT PROPOSALS.—The approval of project and grant proposals shall be a responsibility of each Commission and shall be carried out in accordance with section 15503.

“§ 15303. Functions

“A Commission shall—

“(1) assess the needs and assets of its region based on available research, demonstration projects, investigations, assessments, and evaluations of the region prepared by Federal, State, and local agencies, universities, local development districts, and other nonprofit groups;

“(2) develop, on a continuing basis, comprehensive and coordinated economic and infrastructure development strategies to establish priorities and approve grants for the economic development of its region, giving due consideration to other Federal, State, and local planning and development activities in the region;

“(3) not later than one year after the date of enactment of this section, and after taking into account State plans developed under section 15502, establish priorities in an economic and infrastructure development plan for its region, including 5-year regional outcome targets;

“(4)(A) enhance the capacity of, and provide support for, local development districts in its region; or

“(B) if no local development district exists in an area in a participating State in the region, foster the creation of a local development district;

“(5) encourage private investment in industrial, commercial, and other economic development projects in its region;

“(6) cooperate with and assist State governments with the preparation of economic and infrastructure development plans and programs for participating States;

“(7) formulate and recommend to the Governors and legislatures of States that participate in the Commission forms of interstate cooperation and, where appropriate, international cooperation; and

“(8) work with State and local agencies in developing appropriate model legislation to enhance local and regional economic development.

“§ 15304. Administrative powers and expenses

“(a) POWERS.—In carrying out its duties under this subtitle, a Commission may—

“(1) hold such hearings, sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony, receive such evidence, and print or otherwise reproduce and distribute a description of the proceedings and reports on actions by the Commission as the Commission considers appropriate;

“(2) authorize, through the Federal or State Cochairperson or any other member of the Commission designated by the Commission, the administration of oaths if the Commission determines that testimony should be taken or evidence received under oath;

“(3) request from any Federal, State, or local agency such information as may be available to or procurable by the agency that may be of use to the Commission in carrying out the duties of the Commission;

“(4) adopt, amend, and repeal bylaws and rules governing the conduct of business and the performance of duties by the Commission;

“(5) request the head of any Federal agency, State agency, or local government to detail to the Commission such personnel as the Commission requires to carry out its duties, each such detail to be without loss of seniority, pay, or other employee status;

“(6) provide for coverage of Commission employees in a suitable retirement and employee benefit system by making arrangements or entering into contracts with any participating State government or otherwise providing retirement and other employee coverage;

“(7) accept, use, and dispose of gifts or donations or services or real, personal, tangible, or intangible property;

“(8) enter into and perform such contracts, cooperative agreements, or other trans-

actions as are necessary to carry out Commission duties, including any contracts or cooperative agreements with a department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States, a State (including a political subdivision, agency, or instrumentality of the State), or a person, firm, association, or corporation; and

“(9) maintain a government relations office in the District of Columbia and establish and maintain a central office at such location in its region as the Commission may select.

“(b) FEDERAL AGENCY COOPERATION.—A Federal agency shall—

“(1) cooperate with a Commission; and

“(2) provide, to the extent practicable, on request of the Federal Cochairperson, appropriate assistance in carrying out this subtitle, in accordance with applicable Federal laws (including regulations).

“(c) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), the administrative expenses of a Commission shall be paid—

“(A) by the Federal Government, in an amount equal to 50 percent of the administrative expenses of the Commission; and

“(B) by the States participating in the Commission, in an amount equal to 50 percent of the administrative expenses.

“(2) EXPENSES OF THE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON.—All expenses of the Federal Cochairperson, including expenses of the alternate and staff of the Federal Cochairperson, shall be paid by the Federal Government.

“(3) STATE SHARE.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subparagraph (B), the share of administrative expenses of a Commission to be paid by each State of the Commission shall be determined by a unanimous vote of the State members of the Commission.

“(B) NO FEDERAL PARTICIPATION.—The Federal Cochairperson shall not participate or vote in any decision under subparagraph (A).

“(C) DELINQUENT STATES.—During any period in which a State is more than 1 year delinquent in payment of the State's share of administrative expenses of the Commission under this subsection—

“(i) no assistance under this subtitle shall be provided to the State (including assistance to a political subdivision or a resident of the State) for any project not approved as of the date of the commencement of the delinquency; and

“(ii) no member of the Commission from the State shall participate or vote in any action by the Commission.

“(4) EFFECT ON ASSISTANCE.—A State's share of administrative expenses of a Commission under this subsection shall not be taken into consideration when determining the amount of assistance provided to the State under this subtitle.

“§ 15305. Meetings

“(a) INITIAL MEETING.—Each Commission shall hold an initial meeting not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this section.

“(b) ANNUAL MEETING.—Each Commission shall conduct at least 1 meeting each year with the Federal Cochairperson and at least a majority of the State members present.

“(c) ADDITIONAL MEETINGS.—Each Commission shall conduct additional meetings at such times as it determines and may conduct such meetings by electronic means.

“§ 15306. Personal financial interests

“(a) CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.—

“(1) NO ROLE ALLOWED.—Except as permitted by paragraph (2), an individual who is a State member or alternate, or an officer or employee of a Commission, shall not participate personally and substantially as a member, alternate, officer, or employee of the

Commission, through decision, approval, disapproval, recommendation, request for a ruling, or other determination, contract, claim, controversy, or other matter in which, to the individual's knowledge, any of the following has a financial interest:

“(A) The individual.

“(B) The individual's spouse, minor child, or partner.

“(C) An organization (except a State or political subdivision of a State) in which the individual is serving as an officer, director, trustee, partner, or employee.

“(D) Any person or organization with whom the individual is negotiating or has any arrangement concerning prospective employment.

“(2) EXCEPTION.—Paragraph (1) shall not apply if the individual, in advance of the proceeding, application, request for a ruling or other determination, contract, claim controversy, or other particular matter presenting a potential conflict of interest—

“(A) advises the Commission of the nature and circumstances of the matter presenting the conflict of interest;

“(B) makes full disclosure of the financial interest; and

“(C) receives a written decision of the Commission that the interest is not so substantial as to be considered likely to affect the integrity of the services that the Commission may expect from the individual.

“(3) VIOLATION.—An individual violating this subsection shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than 1 year, or both.

“(b) STATE MEMBER OR ALTERNATE.—A State member or alternate member may not receive any salary, or any contribution to, or supplementation of, salary, for services on a Commission from a source other than the State of the member or alternate.

“(c) DETAILED EMPLOYEES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—No person detailed to serve a Commission shall receive any salary, or any contribution to, or supplementation of, salary, for services provided to the Commission from any source other than the State, local, or intergovernmental department or agency from which the person was detailed to the Commission.

“(2) VIOLATION.—Any person that violates this subsection shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned not more than 1 year, or both.

“(d) FEDERAL COCHAIRMAN, ALTERNATE TO FEDERAL COCHAIRMAN, AND FEDERAL OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES.—The Federal Cochairman, the alternate to the Federal Cochairman, and any Federal officer or employee detailed to duty with the Commission are not subject to this section but remain subject to sections 202 through 209 of title 18.

“(e) RESCISSION.—A Commission may declare void any contract, loan, or grant of or by the Commission in relation to which the Commission determines that there has been a violation of any provision under subsection (a)(1), (b), or (c), or any of the provisions of sections 202 through 209 of title 18.

“§ 15307. Tribal representation on Northern Great Plains Regional Commission

“(a) TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—

“(1) APPOINTMENT.—In addition to the members specified in section 15301(b)(1), the membership of the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission shall include a Tribal Cochairperson, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Tribal Cochairperson shall be a member of an Indian tribe in the Commission's region.

“(2) DUTIES.—In addition to the Federal Cochairperson and State Cochairperson, the Commission shall be headed by the Tribal Cochairperson, who shall serve as a liaison between the governments of Indian tribes in the region and the Commission.

“(b) ALTERNATE TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—

“(1) APPOINTMENT.—The President shall appoint an alternate to the Tribal Cochairperson.

“(2) DUTIES.—The alternate Tribal Cochairperson, when not actively serving as an alternate for the Tribal Cochairperson, shall perform such functions and duties as are delegated by the Tribal Cochairperson.

“(3) VOTING.—The alternate Tribal Cochairperson shall vote in the case of the absence, death, disability, removal, or resignation of the Tribal Cochairperson.

“(c) COMPENSATION.—

“(1) TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—The Tribal Cochairperson shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level III of the Executive Schedule as set out in section 5314 of title 5.

“(2) ALTERNATE TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—The Tribal Cochairperson's alternate shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level V of the Executive Schedule as set out in section 5316 of title 5.

“(d) EXPENSES OF TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—All expenses of the Tribal Cochairperson, including expenses of the alternate and staff of the Tribal Cochairperson, shall be paid by the Federal Government.

“(e) DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES.—Except as provided in subsections (c) and (d), the Tribal Cochairperson shall have the same duties and privileges as the State Cochairperson.

“§ 15308. Tribal participation

“Governments of Indian tribes in the region of the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission or the Southwest Border Regional Commission shall be allowed to participate in matters before that Commission in the same manner and to the same extent as State agencies and instrumentalities in the region.

“§ 15309. Annual report

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the last day of each fiscal year, each Commission shall submit to the President and Congress a report on the activities carried out by the Commission under this subtitle in the fiscal year.

“(b) CONTENTS.—The report shall include—

“(1) a description of the criteria used by the Commission to designate counties under section 15702 and a list of the counties designated in each category;

“(2) an evaluation of the progress of the Commission in meeting the goals identified in the Commission's economic and infrastructure development plan under section 15303 and State economic and infrastructure development plans under section 15502;

“(3) any policy recommendations approved by the Commission.

“CHAPTER 155—FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

“Sec.

“15501. Economic and infrastructure development grants.

“15502. Comprehensive economic and infrastructure development plans.

“15503. Approval of applications for assistance.

“15504. Program development criteria.

“15505. Local development districts and organizations.

“15506. Supplements to Federal grant programs.

“§ 15501. Economic and infrastructure development grants

“(a) IN GENERAL.—A Commission may make grants to States and local governments, Indian tribes, and public and nonprofit organizations for projects, approved in accordance with section 15503—

“(1) to develop the transportation infrastructure of its region;

“(2) to develop the basic public infrastructure of its region;

“(3) to develop the telecommunications infrastructure of its region;

“(4) to assist its region in obtaining job skills training, skills development and employment-related education, entrepreneurship, technology, and business development;

“(5) to provide assistance to severely economically distressed and underdeveloped areas of its region that lack financial resources for improving basic health care and other public services;

“(6) to promote resource conservation, tourism, recreation, and preservation of open space in a manner consistent with economic development goals;

“(7) to promote the development of renewable and alternative energy sources; and

“(8) to otherwise achieve the purposes of this subtitle.

“(b) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—A Commission shall allocate at least 40 percent of any grant amounts provided by the Commission in a fiscal year for projects described in paragraphs (1) through (3) of subsection (a).

“(c) SOURCES OF GRANTS.—Grant amounts may be provided entirely from appropriations to carry out this subtitle, in combination with amounts available under other Federal grant programs, or from any other source.

“(d) MAXIMUM COMMISSION CONTRIBUTIONS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the Commission may contribute not more than 50 percent of a project or activity cost eligible for financial assistance under this section from amounts appropriated to carry out this subtitle.

“(2) DISTRESSED COUNTIES.—The maximum Commission contribution for a project or activity to be carried out in a county for which a distressed county designation is in effect under section 15702 may be increased to 80 percent.

“(3) SPECIAL RULE FOR REGIONAL PROJECTS.—A Commission may increase to 60 percent under paragraph (1) and 90 percent under paragraph (2) the maximum Commission contribution for a project or activity if—

“(A) the project or activity involves 3 or more counties or more than one State; and

“(B) the Commission determines in accordance with section 15302(a) that the project or activity will bring significant interstate or multicounty benefits to a region.

“(e) MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.—Funds may be provided by a Commission for a program or project in a State under this section only if the Commission determines that the level of Federal or State financial assistance provided under a law other than this subtitle, for the same type of program or project in the same area of the State within region, will not be reduced as a result of funds made available by this subtitle.

“(f) NO RELOCATION ASSISTANCE.—Financial assistance authorized by this section may not be used to assist a person or entity in relocating from one area to another.

“§ 15502. Comprehensive economic and infrastructure development plans

“(a) STATE PLANS.—In accordance with policies established by a Commission, each State member of the Commission shall submit a comprehensive economic and infrastructure development plan for the area of the region represented by the State member.

“(b) CONTENT OF PLAN.—A State economic and infrastructure development plan shall reflect the goals, objectives, and priorities identified in any applicable economic and infrastructure development plan developed by a Commission under section 15303.

“(c) CONSULTATION WITH INTERESTED LOCAL PARTIES.—In carrying out the development planning process (including the selection of

programs and projects for assistance), a State shall—

“(1) consult with local development districts, local units of government, and local colleges and universities; and

“(2) take into consideration the goals, objectives, priorities, and recommendations of the entities described in paragraph (1).

“(d) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A Commission and applicable State and local development districts shall encourage and assist, to the maximum extent practicable, public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of all plans and programs under this subtitle.

“(2) GUIDELINES.—A Commission shall develop guidelines for providing public participation, including public hearings.

“§ 15503. Approval of applications for assistance

“(a) EVALUATION BY STATE MEMBER.—An application to a Commission for a grant or any other assistance for a project under this subtitle shall be made through, and evaluated for approval by, the State member of the Commission representing the applicant.

“(b) CERTIFICATION.—An application to a Commission for a grant or other assistance for a project under this subtitle shall be eligible for assistance only on certification by the State member of the Commission representing the applicant that the application for the project—

“(1) describes ways in which the project complies with any applicable State economic and infrastructure development plan;

“(2) meets applicable criteria under section 15504;

“(3) adequately ensures that the project will be properly administered, operated, and maintained; and

“(4) otherwise meets the requirements for assistance under this subtitle.

“(c) VOTES FOR DECISIONS.—On certification by a State member of a Commission of an application for a grant or other assistance for a specific project under this section, an affirmative vote of the Commission under section 15302 shall be required for approval of the application.

“§ 15504. Program development criteria

“(a) IN GENERAL.—In considering programs and projects to be provided assistance by a Commission under this subtitle, and in establishing a priority ranking of the requests for assistance provided to the Commission, the Commission shall follow procedures that ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, consideration of—

“(1) the relationship of the project or class of projects to overall regional development;

“(2) the per capita income and poverty and unemployment and outmigration rates in an area;

“(3) the financial resources available to the applicants for assistance seeking to carry out the project, with emphasis on ensuring that projects are adequately financed to maximize the probability of successful economic development;

“(4) the importance of the project or class of projects in relation to the other projects or classes of projects that may be in competition for the same funds;

“(5) the prospects that the project for which assistance is sought will improve, on a continuing rather than a temporary basis, the opportunities for employment, the average level of income, or the economic development of the area to be served by the project; and

“(6) the extent to which the project design provides for detailed outcome measurements by which grant expenditures and the results of the expenditures may be evaluated.

“§ 15505. Local development districts and organizations

“(a) GRANTS TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS.—Subject to the requirements of this section, a Commission may make grants to a local development district to assist in the payment of development planning and administrative expenses.

“(b) CONDITIONS FOR GRANTS.—

“(1) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—The amount of a grant awarded under this section may not exceed 80 percent of the administrative and planning expenses of the local development district receiving the grant.

“(2) MAXIMUM PERIOD FOR STATE AGENCIES.—In the case of a State agency certified as a local development district, a grant may not be awarded to the agency under this section for more than 3 fiscal years.

“(3) LOCAL SHARE.—The contributions of a local development district for administrative expenses may be in cash or in kind, fairly evaluated, including space, equipment, and services.

“(c) DUTIES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS.—A local development district shall—

“(1) operate as a lead organization serving multicounty areas in the region at the local level;

“(2) assist the Commission in carrying out outreach activities for local governments, community development groups, the business community, and the public;

“(3) serve as a liaison between State and local governments, nonprofit organizations (including community-based groups and educational institutions), the business community, and citizens; and

“(4) assist the individuals and entities described in paragraph (3) in identifying, assessing, and facilitating projects and programs to promote the economic development of the region.

“§ 15506. Supplements to Federal grant programs

“(a) FINDING.—Congress finds that certain States and local communities of the region, including local development districts, may be unable to take maximum advantage of Federal grant programs for which the States and communities are eligible because—

“(1) they lack the economic resources to provide the required matching share; or

“(2) there are insufficient funds available under the applicable Federal law with respect to a project to be carried out in the region.

“(b) FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING.—A Commission, with the approval of the Federal Cochairperson, may use amounts made available to carry out this subtitle—

“(1) for any part of the basic Federal contribution to projects or activities under the Federal grant programs authorized by Federal laws; and

“(2) to increase the Federal contribution to projects and activities under the programs above the fixed maximum part of the cost of the projects or activities otherwise authorized by the applicable law.

“(c) CERTIFICATION REQUIRED.—For a program, project, or activity for which any part of the basic Federal contribution to the project or activity under a Federal grant program is proposed to be made under subsection (b), the Federal contribution shall not be made until the responsible Federal official administering the Federal law authorizing the Federal contribution certifies that the program, project, or activity meets the applicable requirements of the Federal law and could be approved for Federal contribution under that law if amounts were available under the law for the program, project, or activity.

“(d) LIMITATIONS IN OTHER LAWS INAPPLICABLE.—Amounts provided pursuant to this

subtitle are available without regard to any limitations on areas eligible for assistance or authorizations for appropriation in any other law.

“(e) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of the cost of a project or activity receiving assistance under this section shall not exceed 80 percent.

“(f) MAXIMUM COMMISSION CONTRIBUTION.—Section 15501(d), relating to limitations on Commission contributions, shall apply to a program, project, or activity receiving assistance under this section.

“CHAPTER 156—ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

“SUBCHAPTER I—GENERAL PROVISIONS

“Sec.

“15701. Consent of States.

“15702. Distressed counties and areas.

“15703. Counties eligible for assistance in more than one region.

“15704. Inspector General; Records.

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“SUBCHAPTER II—DESIGNATION OF REGIONS

“15731. Delta Regional Commission.

“15732. Northern Great Plains Regional Commission.

“15733. Southeast Crescent Regional Commission.

“15734. Southwest Border Regional Commission.

“15735. Northern Border Regional Commission.

“SUBCHAPTER III—AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

“15751. Authorization of appropriations.

“SUBCHAPTER I—GENERAL PROVISIONS

“§ 15701. Consent of States

“This subtitle does not require a State to engage in or accept a program under this subtitle without its consent.

“§ 15702. Distressed counties and areas

“(a) DESIGNATIONS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this section, and annually thereafter, each Commission shall make the following designations:

“(1) DISTRESSED COUNTIES.—The Commission shall designate as distressed counties those counties in its region that are the most severely and persistently economically distressed and underdeveloped and have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration.

“(2) TRANSITIONAL COUNTIES.—The Commission shall designate as transitional counties those counties in its region that are economically distressed and underdeveloped or have recently suffered high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration.

“(3) ATTAINMENT COUNTIES.—The Commission shall designate as attainment counties, those counties in its region that are not designated as distressed or transitional counties under this subsection.

“(4) ISOLATED AREAS OF DISTRESS.—The Commission shall designate as isolated areas of distress, areas located in counties designated as attainment counties under paragraph (3) that have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration.

“(b) ALLOCATION.—A Commission shall allocate at least 50 percent of the appropriations made available to the Commission to carry out this subtitle for programs and projects designed to serve the needs of distressed counties and isolated areas of distress in the region.

“(c) ATTAINMENT COUNTIES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), funds may not be provided under this subtitle for a project located in a county designated as an attainment county under subsection (a).

“(2) EXCEPTIONS.—

“(A) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS.—The funding prohibition under paragraph (1) shall not apply to grants to fund the administrative expenses of local development districts under section 15505.

“(B) MULTICOUNTY AND OTHER PROJECTS.—A Commission may waive the application of the funding prohibition under paragraph (1) with respect to—

“(i) a multicounty project that includes participation by an attainment county; and

“(ii) any other type of project, if a Commission determines that the project could bring significant benefits to areas of the region outside an attainment county.

“(3) ISOLATED AREAS OF DISTRESS.—For a designation of an isolated area of distress to be effective, the designation shall be supported—

“(A) by the most recent Federal data available; or

“(B) if no recent Federal data are available, by the most recent data available through the government of the State in which the isolated area of distress is located.

“§ 15703. Counties eligible for assistance in more than one region

“(a) LIMITATION.—A political subdivision of a State may not receive assistance under this subtitle in a fiscal year from more than one Commission.

“(b) SELECTION OF COMMISSION.—A political subdivision included in the region of more than one Commission shall select the Commission with which it will participate by notifying, in writing, the Federal Cochairperson and the appropriate State member of that Commission.

“(c) CHANGES IN SELECTIONS.—The selection of a Commission by a political subdivision shall apply in the fiscal year in which the selection is made, and shall apply in each subsequent fiscal year unless the political subdivision, at least 90 days before the first day of the fiscal year, notifies the Cochairpersons of another Commission in writing that the political subdivision will participate in that Commission and also transmits a copy of such notification to the Cochairpersons of the Commission in which the political subdivision is currently participating.

“(d) INCLUSION OF APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION.—In this section, the term ‘Commission’ includes the Appalachian Regional Commission established under chapter 143.

“§ 15704. Inspector General; records

“(a) APPOINTMENT OF INSPECTOR GENERAL.—There shall be an Inspector General for the Commissions appointed in accordance with section 3(a) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.). All of the Commissions shall be subject to a single Inspector General.

“(b) RECORDS OF A COMMISSION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A Commission shall maintain accurate and complete records of all its transactions and activities.

“(2) AVAILABILITY.—All records of a Commission shall be available for audit and examination by the Inspector General (including authorized representatives of the Inspector General).

“(c) RECORDS OF RECIPIENTS OF COMMISSION ASSISTANCE.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A recipient of funds from a Commission under this subtitle shall maintain accurate and complete records of transactions and activities financed with the funds and report to the Commission on the transactions and activities.

“(2) AVAILABILITY.—All records required under paragraph (1) shall be available for audit by the Commission and the Inspector General (including authorized representatives of the Commission and the Inspector General).

“(d) ANNUAL AUDIT.—The Inspector General shall audit the activities, transactions, and records of each Commission on an annual basis.

“§ 15705. Biannual meetings of representatives of all Commissions

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Representatives of each Commission, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Denali Commission shall meet biannually to discuss issues confronting regions suffering from chronic and contiguous distress and successful strategies for promoting regional development.

“(b) CHAIR OF MEETINGS.—The chair of each meeting shall rotate among the Commissions, with the Appalachian Regional Commission to host the first meeting.

“§ 15706. Relationship to other laws

“Projects receiving assistance under this subtitle shall be treated in the manner provided in section 602 of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3212).

“SUBCHAPTER II—DESIGNATION OF REGIONS

“§ 15731. Delta Regional Commission

“The region of the Delta Regional Commission shall consist of the following political subdivisions:

“(1) ALABAMA.—The counties of Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Escambia, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Perry, Pickens, Russell, Sumter, Washington, and Wilcox in the State of Alabama.

“(2) ARKANSAS.—The counties of Arkansas, Ashley, Baxter, Bradley, Calhoun, Chicot, Clay, Cleveland, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Dallas, Desha, Drew, Fulton, Grant, Greene, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lee, Lincoln, Lonoke, Marion, Mississippi, Monroe, Ouachita, Phillips, Poinsett, Prairie, Pulaski, Randolph, St. Francis, Searcy, Sharp, Stone, Union, Van Buren, White, and Woodruff in the State of Arkansas.

“(3) ILLINOIS.—The counties of Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, White, and Woodruff in the State of Illinois.

“(4) KENTUCKY.—The counties of Ballard, Caldwell, Calloway, Carlisle, Christian, Crittenden, Fulton, Graves, Henderson, Hickman, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Marshall, McCracken, McLean, Muhlenberg, Todd, Trigg, Union, and Webster in the State of Kentucky.

“(5) LOUISIANA.—The parishes of Acadia, Allen, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Caldwell, Catahoula, Concordia, E. Baton Rouge, E. Carroll, E. Feliciana, Evangeline, Franklin, Grant, Iberia, Iberville, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafourche, La Salle, Lincoln, Livingston, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Orleans, Ouachita, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Richland, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, Tangipahoa, Tensas, Union, Washington, W. Baton Rouge, W. Carroll, W. Feliciana, and Winn in the State of Louisiana.

“(6) MISSISSIPPI.—The counties of Adams, Amite, Attala, Benton, Bolivar, Carroll, Claiborne, Coahoma, Copiah, Covington, Desoto, Franklin, Grenada, Hinds, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lawrence, Leflore, Lincoln, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Montgomery, Panola, Pike, Quitman, Rankin, Sharkey, Simpson, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tippah, Tunica, Union, Walthall, Warren, Washington, Wilkinson, Yalobusha, and Yazoo in the State of Mississippi.

“(7) MISSOURI.—The counties Bollinger, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Crawford,

Dent, Douglas, Dunklin, Howell, Iron, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Oregon, Ozark, Pemiscott, Perry, Phelps, Reynolds, Ripley, Ste. Genevieve, St. Francois, Scott, Shannon, Stoddard, Texas, Washington, Wayne, and Wright in the State of Missouri.

“(8) TENNESSEE.—The counties of Benton, Carroll, Chester, Crockett, Decatur, Dyer, Fayette, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Henry, Lake, Lauderdale, McNairy, Madison, Obion, Shelby, Tipton, and Weakley in the State of Tennessee.

“§ 15732. Northern Great Plains Regional Commission

“The region of the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission shall consist of all counties of the States of Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

“§ 15733. Southeast Crescent Regional Commission

“The region of the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission shall consist of all counties of the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida not already served by the Appalachian Regional Commission or the Delta Regional Commission.

“§ 15734. Southwest Border Regional Commission

“The region of the Southwest Border Regional Commission shall consist of the following political subdivisions:

“(1) ARIZONA.—The counties of Cochise, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Yuma in the State of Arizona.

“(2) CALIFORNIA.—The counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura in the State of California.

“(3) NEW MEXICO.—The counties of Catron, Chaves, Dona Ana, Eddy, Grant, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Luna, Otero, Sierra, and Socorro in the State of New Mexico.

“(4) TEXAS.—The counties of Atascosa, Bandera, Bee, Bexar, Brewster, Brooks, Cameron, Coke, Concho, Crane, Crockett, Culberson, Dimmit, Duval, Ector, Edwards, El Paso, Frio, Gillespie, Glasscock, Hidalgo, Hudspeth, Irion, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Karnes, Kendall, Kenedy, Kerr, Kimble, Kinney, Kleberg, La Salle, Live Oak, Loving, Mason, Maverick, McMullen, Medina, Menard, Midland, Nueces, Pecos, Presidio, Reagan, Real, Reeves, San Patricio, Shleicher, Sutton, Starr, Sterling, Terrell, Tom Green Upton, Uvalde, Val Verde, Ward, Webb, Willacy, Wilson, Winkler, Zapata, and Zavala in the State of Texas.

“§ 15735. Northern Border Regional Commission

“The region of the Northern Border Regional Commission shall include the following counties:

“(1) MAINE.—The counties of Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington in the State of Maine.

“(2) NEW HAMPSHIRE.—The counties of Carroll, Coos, Grafton, and Sullivan in the State of New Hampshire.

“(3) NEW YORK.—The counties of Cayuga, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Oswego, Seneca, and St. Lawrence in the State of New York.

“(4) VERMONT.—The counties of Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, and Orleans in the State of Vermont.

“SUBCHAPTER III—AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

“§ 15751. Authorization of appropriations

“(a) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated to each Commission to carry out this subtitle—

- “(1) \$40,000,000 for fiscal year 2008;
- “(2) \$45,000,000 for fiscal year 2009;
- “(3) \$50,000,000 for fiscal year 2010;
- “(4) \$55,000,000 for fiscal year 2011; and
- “(5) \$60,000,000 for fiscal year 2012.

“(b) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—Not more than 10 percent of the funds made available to a Commission in a fiscal year under this section may be used for administrative expenses.”

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of subtitles for chapter 40, United States Code, is amended by striking the item relating to subtitle V and inserting the following:

“V. REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

MENT 15101
“VI. MISCELLANEOUS 17101.”

SEC. 4. CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.

(a) REPEALS.—Subtitles F and G of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 2009aa–2009bb–13) are repealed.

(b) INSPECTOR GENERAL ACT.—Section 11 of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1) by striking “or the President of the Export-Import Bank;” and inserting “the President of the Export-Import Bank; or the Federal Cochairpersons of the Commissions established under section 15301 of title 40, United States Code;”; and

(2) in paragraph (2) by striking “or the Export-Import Bank,” and inserting “the Export-Import Bank, or the Commissions established under section 15301 of title 40, United States Code.”

SEC. 5. TRANSFERS OF AUTHORITY AND SAVINGS PROVISIONS.

(a) TRANSFERS OF AUTHORITY.—Subject to the requirements of this Act (including the amendments made by this Act)—

(1) all of the functions of the Delta Regional Authority are transferred to the Delta Regional Commission; and

(2) all of the functions of the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority are transferred to the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission.

(b) LEGAL DOCUMENTS.—All orders, determinations, rules, regulations, grants, loans, contracts, and agreements—

(1) that have been issued, made, granted, or allowed to become effective by the Delta Regional Authority or the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority in the performance of any function that is transferred by this section, and

(2) that are in effect on the effective date of such transfer (or become effective after such date pursuant to their terms as in effect on such effective date),

shall continue in effect according to their terms until modified, terminated, superseded, set aside, or revoked in accordance with law by an authorized official, a court of competent jurisdiction, or operation of law.

(c) TRANSFER OF ASSETS AND PERSONNEL.—

(1) DELTA REGIONAL COMMISSION.—There shall be transferred to the Delta Regional Commission such assets, funds, personnel, records, and other property of the Delta Regional Authority relating to the functions of the Authority as the Commission determines appropriate.

(2) NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION.—There shall be transferred to the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission such assets, funds, personnel, records, and other property of the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority as the Commission determines appropriate.

SEC. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act, and the amendments made by this Act, shall take effect on the first day of the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 704, the

amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in the bill, modified by the amendment printed in House Report 110–361, is adopted and the bill, as amended, is considered read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

H.R. 3246

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) certain regions of the Nation, including Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta Region, the Northern Great Plains Region, the Southeast Crescent Region, the Southwest Border Region, the Northern Border Region, and rural Alaska, have suffered from chronic distress far above the national average;

(2) an economically distressed region can suffer unemployment and poverty at a rate that is 150 percent of the national average; and

(3) regional commissions are unique Federal-State partnerships that can provide targeted resources to alleviate pervasive economic distress.

(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to provide a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely economically distressed regions in the Nation; and

(2) to ensure that the most severely economically distressed regions in the Nation have the necessary tools to develop the basic building blocks for economic development, such as transportation and basic public infrastructure, job skills training, and business development.

SEC. 3. REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title 40, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subtitle V as subtitle VI; and

(2) by inserting after subtitle IV the following:

“Subtitle V—Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development

Chapter	Sec.
“151. GENERAL PROVISIONS	15101
“153. REGIONAL COMMISSIONS	15301
“155. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	15501
“157. ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS	15701

“CHAPTER 151—GENERAL PROVISIONS

“Sec.

“15101. Definitions.

“§ 15101. Definitions

“In this subtitle, the following definitions apply:

“(1) COMMISSION.—The term ‘Commission’ means a Commission established under section 15301.

“(2) LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT.—The term ‘local development district’ means an entity that—

“(A)(i) is an economic development district that is—

“(I) in existence on the date of enactment of this chapter; and

“(II) located in the region; or

“(ii) if an entity described in clause (i) does not exist—

“(I) is organized and operated in a manner that ensures broad-based community participation and an effective opportunity for local officials, community leaders, and the public to contribute to the development and implementation of programs in the region;

“(II) is governed by a policy board with at least a simple majority of members consisting of—

“(aa) elected officials; or

“(bb) designees or employees of a general purpose unit of local government that have been appointed to represent the unit of local government; and

“(III) is certified by the Governor or appropriate State officer as having a charter or authority that includes the economic development of counties, portions of counties, or other political subdivisions within the region; and

“(B) has not, as certified by the Federal Cochairperson—

“(i) inappropriately used Federal grant funds from any Federal source; or

“(ii) appointed an officer who, during the period in which another entity inappropriately used Federal grant funds from any Federal source, was an officer of the other entity.

“(3) FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAM.—The term ‘Federal grant program’ means a Federal grant program to provide assistance in carrying out economic and community development activities.

“(4) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term ‘Indian tribe’ has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b).

“(5) NONPROFIT ENTITY.—The term ‘nonprofit entity’ means any entity with tax-exempt or nonprofit status, as defined by the Internal Revenue Service, that has been formed for the purpose of economic development.

“(6) REGION.—The term ‘region’ means the area covered by a Commission as described in subchapter II of chapter 157.

“CHAPTER 153—REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

“Sec.

“15301. Establishment, membership, and employees.

“15302. Decisions.

“15303. Functions.

“15304. Administrative powers and expenses.

“15305. Meetings.

“15306. Personal financial interests.

“15307. Tribal representation on Northern Great Plains Regional Commission.

“15308. Tribal participation.

“15309. Annual report.

“§ 15301. Establishment, membership, and employees

“(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There are established the following regional Commissions:

“(1) The Delta Regional Commission.

“(2) The Northern Great Plains Regional Commission.

“(3) The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission.

“(4) The Southwest Border Regional Commission.

“(5) The Northern Border Regional Commission.

“(b) MEMBERSHIP.—

“(1) FEDERAL AND STATE MEMBERS.—Each Commission shall be composed of the following members:

“(A) A Federal Cochairperson, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

“(B) The Governor of each participating State in the region of the Commission.

“(2) ALTERNATE MEMBERS.—

“(A) ALTERNATE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON.—The President shall appoint an alternate Federal Cochairperson for each Commission. The alternate Federal Cochairperson, when not actively serving as an alternate for the Federal Cochairperson, shall perform such functions and duties as are delegated by the Federal Cochairperson.

“(B) STATE ALTERNATES.—The State member of a participating State may have a single alternate, who shall be appointed by the Governor of the State from among the members of the Governor’s cabinet or personal staff.

“(C) VOTING.—An alternate member shall vote in the case of the absence, death, disability, removal, or resignation of the Federal or State member for which the alternate member is an alternate.

“(3) COCHAIRPERSONS.—A Commission shall be headed by—

“(A) the Federal Cochairperson, who shall serve as a liaison between the Federal Government and the Commission; and

“(B) a State Cochairperson, who shall be a Governor of a participating State in the region and shall be elected by the State members for a term of not less than 1 year.

“(4) CONSECUTIVE TERMS.—A State member may not be elected to serve as State Cochairperson for more than 2 consecutive terms.

“(c) COMPENSATION.—

“(1) FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSONS.—Each Federal Cochairperson shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level III of the Executive Schedule as set out in section 5314 of title 5.

“(2) ALTERNATE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSONS.—Each Federal Cochairperson's alternate shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level V of the Executive Schedule as set out in section 5316 of title 5.

“(3) STATE MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES.—Each State member and alternate shall be compensated by the State that they represent at the rate established by the laws of that State.

“(d) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND STAFF.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A Commission shall appoint and fix the compensation of an executive director and such other personnel as are necessary to enable the Commission to carry out its duties. Compensation under this paragraph may not exceed the maximum rate of basic pay established for the Senior Executive Service under section 5382 of title 5, including any applicable locality-based comparability payment that may be authorized under section 5304(h)(2)(C) of that title.

“(2) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.—The executive director shall be responsible for carrying out the administrative duties of the Commission, directing the Commission staff, and such other duties as the Commission may assign.

“(e) NO FEDERAL EMPLOYEE STATUS.—No member, alternate, officer, or employee of a Commission (other than the Federal Cochairperson, the alternate Federal Cochairperson, staff of the Federal Cochairperson, and any Federal employee detailed to the Commission) shall be considered to be a Federal employee for any purpose.

“§ 15302. Decisions

“(a) REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROVAL.—Except as provided in section 15304(e)(3), decisions by the Commission shall require the affirmative vote of the Federal Cochairperson and a majority of the State members (exclusive of members representing States delinquent under section 15304(c)(3)(C)).

“(b) CONSULTATION.—In matters coming before the Commission, the Federal Cochairperson shall, to the extent practicable, consult with the Federal departments and agencies having an interest in the subject matter.

“(c) QUORUMS.—A Commission shall determine what constitutes a quorum for Commission meetings; except that—

“(1) any quorum shall include the Federal Cochairperson or the alternate Federal Cochairperson; and

“(2) a State alternate member shall not be counted toward the establishment of a quorum.

“(d) PROJECTS AND GRANT PROPOSALS.—The approval of project and grant proposals shall be a responsibility of each Commission and shall be carried out in accordance with section 15503.

“§ 15303. Functions

“A Commission shall—

“(1) assess the needs and assets of its region based on available research, demonstration projects, investigations, assessments, and evaluations of the region prepared by Federal, State, and local agencies, universities, local development districts, and other nonprofit groups;

“(2) develop, on a continuing basis, comprehensive and coordinated economic and infrastructure development strategies to establish priorities and approve grants for the economic de-

velopment of its region, giving due consideration to other Federal, State, and local planning and development activities in the region;

“(3) not later than one year after the date of enactment of this section, and after taking into account State plans developed under section 15502, establish priorities in an economic and infrastructure development plan for its region, including 5-year regional outcome targets;

“(4)(A) enhance the capacity of, and provide support for, local development districts in its region; or

“(B) if no local development district exists in an area in a participating State in the region, foster the creation of a local development district;

“(5) encourage private investment in industrial, commercial, and other economic development projects in its region;

“(6) cooperate with and assist State governments with the preparation of economic and infrastructure development plans and programs for participating States;

“(7) formulate and recommend to the Governors and legislatures of States that participate in the Commission forms of interstate cooperation and, where appropriate, international cooperation; and

“(8) work with State and local agencies in developing appropriate model legislation to enhance local and regional economic development.

“§ 15304. Administrative powers and expenses

“(a) POWERS.—In carrying out its duties under this subtitle, a Commission may—

“(1) hold such hearings, sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony, receive such evidence, and print or otherwise reproduce and distribute a description of the proceedings and reports on actions by the Commission as the Commission considers appropriate;

“(2) authorize, through the Federal or State Cochairperson or any other member of the Commission designated by the Commission, the administration of oaths if the Commission determines that testimony should be taken or evidence received under oath;

“(3) request from any Federal, State, or local agency such information as may be available to or procurable by the agency that may be of use to the Commission in carrying out the duties of the Commission;

“(4) adopt, amend, and repeal bylaws and rules governing the conduct of business and the performance of duties by the Commission;

“(5) request the head of any Federal agency, State agency, or local government to detail to the Commission such personnel as the Commission requires to carry out its duties, each such detail to be without loss of seniority, pay, or other employee status;

“(6) provide for coverage of Commission employees in a suitable retirement and employee benefit system by making arrangements or entering into contracts with any participating State government or otherwise providing retirement and other employee coverage;

“(7) accept, use, and dispose of gifts or donations or services or real, personal, tangible, or intangible property;

“(8) enter into and perform such contracts, cooperative agreements, or other transactions as are necessary to carry out Commission duties, including any contracts or cooperative agreements with a department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States, a State (including a political subdivision, agency, or instrumentality of the State), or a person, firm, association, or corporation; and

“(9) maintain a government relations office in the District of Columbia and establish and maintain a central office at such location in its region as the Commission may select.

“(b) FEDERAL AGENCY COOPERATION.—A Federal agency shall—

“(1) cooperate with a Commission; and

“(2) provide, to the extent practicable, on request of the Federal Cochairperson, appropriate

assistance in carrying out this subtitle, in accordance with applicable Federal laws (including regulations).

“(c) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), the administrative expenses of a Commission shall be paid—

“(A) by the Federal Government, in an amount equal to 50 percent of the administrative expenses of the Commission; and

“(B) by the States participating in the Commission, in an amount equal to 50 percent of the administrative expenses.

“(2) EXPENSES OF THE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON.—All expenses of the Federal Cochairperson, including expenses of the alternate and staff of the Federal Cochairperson, shall be paid by the Federal Government.

“(3) STATE SHARE.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subparagraph (B), the share of administrative expenses of a Commission to be paid by each State of the Commission shall be determined by a unanimous vote of the State members of the Commission.

“(B) NO FEDERAL PARTICIPATION.—The Federal Cochairperson shall not participate or vote in any decision under subparagraph (A).

“(C) DELINQUENT STATES.—During any period in which a State is more than 1 year delinquent in payment of the State's share of administrative expenses of the Commission under this subsection—

“(i) no assistance under this subtitle shall be provided to the State (including assistance to a political subdivision or a resident of the State) for any project not approved as of the date of the commencement of the delinquency; and

“(ii) no member of the Commission from the State shall participate or vote in any action by the Commission.

“(4) EFFECT ON ASSISTANCE.—A State's share of administrative expenses of a Commission under this subsection shall not be taken into consideration when determining the amount of assistance provided to the State under this subtitle.

“§ 15305. Meetings

“(a) INITIAL MEETING.—Each Commission shall hold an initial meeting not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this section.

“(b) ANNUAL MEETING.—Each Commission shall conduct at least 1 meeting each year with the Federal Cochairperson and at least a majority of the State members present.

“(c) ADDITIONAL MEETINGS.—Each Commission shall conduct additional meetings at such times as it determines and may conduct such meetings by electronic means.

“§ 15306. Personal financial interests

“(a) CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.—

“(1) NO ROLE ALLOWED.—Except as permitted by paragraph (2), an individual who is a State member or alternate, or an officer or employee of a Commission, shall not participate personally and substantially as a member, alternate, officer, or employee of the Commission, through decision, approval, disapproval, recommendation, request for a ruling, or other determination, contract, claim, controversy, or other matter in which, to the individual's knowledge, any of the following has a financial interest:

“(A) The individual.

“(B) The individual's spouse, minor child, or partner.

“(C) An organization (except a State or political subdivision of a State) in which the individual is serving as an officer, director, trustee, partner, or employee.

“(D) Any person or organization with whom the individual is negotiating or has any arrangement concerning prospective employment.

“(2) EXCEPTION.—Paragraph (1) shall not apply if the individual, in advance of the proceeding, application, request for a ruling or other determination, contract, claim controversy, or other particular matter presenting a potential conflict of interest—

“(A) advises the Commission of the nature and circumstances of the matter presenting the conflict of interest;

“(B) makes full disclosure of the financial interest; and

“(C) receives a written decision of the Commission that the interest is not so substantial as to be considered likely to affect the integrity of the services that the Commission may expect from the individual.

“(3) VIOLATION.—An individual violating this subsection shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than 1 year, or both.

“(b) STATE MEMBER OR ALTERNATE.—A State member or alternate member may not receive any salary, or any contribution to, or supplementation of, salary, for services on a Commission from a source other than the State of the member or alternate.

“(c) DETAILED EMPLOYEES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—No person detailed to serve a Commission shall receive any salary, or any contribution to, or supplementation of, salary, for services provided to the Commission from any source other than the State, local, or intergovernmental department or agency from which the person was detailed to the Commission.

“(2) VIOLATION.—Any person that violates this subsection shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than 1 year, or both.

“(d) FEDERAL COCHAIRMAN, ALTERNATE TO FEDERAL COCHAIRMAN, AND FEDERAL OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES.—The Federal Chairman, the alternate to the Federal Chairman, and any Federal officer or employee detailed to duty with the Commission are not subject to this section but remain subject to sections 202 through 209 of title 18.

“(e) RESCISSION.—A Commission may declare void any contract, loan, or grant of or by the Commission in relation to which the Commission determines that there has been a violation of any provision under subsection (a)(1), (b), or (c), or any of the provisions of sections 202 through 209 of title 18.

“§15307. Tribal representation on Northern Great Plains Regional Commission

“(a) TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—

“(1) APPOINTMENT.—In addition to the members specified in section 15301(b)(1), the membership of the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission shall include a Tribal Cochairperson, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Tribal Cochairperson shall be a member of an Indian tribe in the Commission's region.

“(2) DUTIES.—In addition to the Federal Cochairperson and State Cochairperson, the Commission shall be headed by the Tribal Cochairperson, who shall serve as a liaison between the governments of Indian tribes in the region and the Commission.

“(b) ALTERNATE TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—

“(1) APPOINTMENT.—The President shall appoint an alternate to the Tribal Cochairperson.

“(2) DUTIES.—The alternate Tribal Cochairperson, when not actively serving as an alternate for the Tribal Cochairperson, shall perform such functions and duties as are delegated by the Tribal Cochairperson.

“(3) VOTING.—The alternate Tribal Cochairperson shall vote in the case of the absence, death, disability, removal, or resignation of the Tribal Cochairperson.

“(c) COMPENSATION.—

“(1) TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—The Tribal Cochairperson shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level III of the Executive Schedule as set out in section 5314 of title 5.

“(2) ALTERNATE TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—The Tribal Cochairperson's alternate shall be compensated by the Federal Government at level V of the Executive Schedule as set out in section 5316 of title 5.

“(d) EXPENSES OF TRIBAL COCHAIRPERSON.—All expenses of the Tribal Cochairperson, including expenses of the alternate and staff of

the Tribal Cochairperson, shall be paid by the Federal Government.

“(e) DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES.—Except as provided in subsections (c) and (d), the Tribal Cochairperson shall have the same duties and privileges as the State Cochairperson.

“§15308. Tribal participation

“Governments of Indian tribes in the region of the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission or the Southwest Border Regional Commission shall be allowed to participate in matters before that Commission in the same manner and to the same extent as State agencies and instrumentalities in the region.

“§15309. Annual report

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the last day of each fiscal year, each Commission shall submit to the President and Congress a report on the activities carried out by the Commission under this subtitle in the fiscal year.

“(b) CONTENTS.—The report shall include—

“(1) a description of the criteria used by the Commission to designate counties under section 15702 and a list of the counties designated in each category;

“(2) an evaluation of the progress of the Commission in meeting the goals identified in the Commission's economic and infrastructure development plan under section 15303 and State economic and infrastructure development plans under section 15502; and

“(3) any policy recommendations approved by the Commission.

“CHAPTER 155—FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

“Sec.

“15501. Economic and infrastructure development grants.

“15502. Comprehensive economic and infrastructure development plans.

“15503. Approval of applications for assistance.

“15504. Program development criteria.

“15505. Local development districts and organizations.

“15506. Supplements to Federal grant programs.

“§15501. Economic and infrastructure development grants

“(a) IN GENERAL.—A Commission may make grants to States and local governments, Indian tribes, and public and nonprofit organizations for projects, approved in accordance with section 15503—

“(1) to develop the transportation infrastructure of its region;

“(2) to develop the basic public infrastructure of its region;

“(3) to develop the telecommunications infrastructure of its region;

“(4) to assist its region in obtaining job skills training, skills development and employment-related education, entrepreneurship, technology, and business development;

“(5) to provide assistance to severely economically distressed and underdeveloped areas of its region that lack financial resources for improving basic health care and other public services;

“(6) to promote resource conservation, tourism, recreation, and preservation of open space in a manner consistent with economic development goals;

“(7) to promote the development of renewable and alternative energy sources; and

“(8) to otherwise achieve the purposes of this subtitle.

“(b) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—A Commission shall allocate at least 40 percent of any grant amounts provided by the Commission in a fiscal year for projects described in paragraphs (1) through (3) of subsection (a).

“(c) SOURCES OF GRANTS.—Grant amounts may be provided entirely from appropriations to carry out this subtitle, in combination with amounts available under other Federal grant programs, or from any other source.

“(d) MAXIMUM COMMISSION CONTRIBUTIONS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the Commission may contribute not

more than 50 percent of a project or activity cost eligible for financial assistance under this section from amounts appropriated to carry out this subtitle.

“(2) DISTRESSED COUNTIES.—The maximum Commission contribution for a project or activity to be carried out in a county for which a distressed county designation is in effect under section 15702 may be increased to 80 percent.

“(3) SPECIAL RULE FOR REGIONAL PROJECTS.—A Commission may increase to 60 percent under paragraph (1) and 90 percent under paragraph (2) the maximum Commission contribution for a project or activity if—

“(A) the project or activity involves 3 or more counties or more than one State; and

“(B) the Commission determines in accordance with section 15302(a) that the project or activity will bring significant interstate or multicounty benefits to a region.

“(e) MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.—Funds may be provided by a Commission for a program or project in a State under this section only if the Commission determines that the level of Federal or State financial assistance provided under a law other than this subtitle, for the same type of program or project in the same area of the State within region, will not be reduced as a result of funds made available by this subtitle.

“(f) NO RELOCATION ASSISTANCE.—Financial assistance authorized by this section may not be used to assist a person or entity in relocating from one area to another.

“§15502. Comprehensive economic and infrastructure development plans

“(a) STATE PLANS.—In accordance with policies established by a Commission, each State member of the Commission shall submit a comprehensive economic and infrastructure development plan for the area of the region represented by the State member.

“(b) CONTENT OF PLAN.—A State economic and infrastructure development plan shall reflect the goals, objectives, and priorities identified in any applicable economic and infrastructure development plan developed by a Commission under section 15303.

“(c) CONSULTATION WITH INTERESTED LOCAL PARTIES.—In carrying out the development planning process (including the selection of programs and projects for assistance), a State shall—

“(1) consult with local development districts, local units of government, and local colleges and universities; and

“(2) take into consideration the goals, objectives, priorities, and recommendations of the entities described in paragraph (1).

“(d) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A Commission and applicable State and local development districts shall encourage and assist, to the maximum extent practicable, public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of all plans and programs under this subtitle.

“(2) GUIDELINES.—A Commission shall develop guidelines for providing public participation, including public hearings.

“§15503. Approval of applications for assistance

“(a) EVALUATION BY STATE MEMBER.—An application to a Commission for a grant or any other assistance for a project under this subtitle shall be made through, and evaluated for approval by, the State member of the Commission representing the applicant.

“(b) CERTIFICATION.—An application to a Commission for a grant or other assistance for a project under this subtitle shall be eligible for assistance only on certification by the State member of the Commission representing the applicant that the application for the project—

“(1) describes ways in which the project complies with any applicable State economic and infrastructure development plan;

“(2) meets applicable criteria under section 15504;

“(3) adequately ensures that the project will be properly administered, operated, and maintained; and

“(4) otherwise meets the requirements for assistance under this subtitle.

“(c) **VOTES FOR DECISIONS.**—On certification by a State member of a Commission of an application for a grant or other assistance for a specific project under this section, an affirmative vote of the Commission under section 15302 shall be required for approval of the application.

“§ 15504. Program development criteria

“(a) **IN GENERAL.**—In considering programs and projects to be provided assistance by a Commission under this subtitle, and in establishing a priority ranking of the requests for assistance provided to the Commission, the Commission shall follow procedures that ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, consideration of—

“(1) the relationship of the project or class of projects to overall regional development;

“(2) the per capita income and poverty and unemployment and outmigration rates in an area;

“(3) the financial resources available to the applicants for assistance seeking to carry out the project, with emphasis on ensuring that projects are adequately financed to maximize the probability of successful economic development;

“(4) the importance of the project or class of projects in relation to the other projects or classes of projects that may be in competition for the same funds;

“(5) the prospects that the project for which assistance is sought will improve, on a continuing rather than a temporary basis, the opportunities for employment, the average level of income, or the economic development of the area to be served by the project; and

“(6) the extent to which the project design provides for detailed outcome measurements by which grant expenditures and the results of the expenditures may be evaluated.

“§ 15505. Local development districts and organizations

“(a) **GRANTS TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS.**—Subject to the requirements of this section, a Commission may make grants to a local development district to assist in the payment of development planning and administrative expenses.

“(b) **CONDITIONS FOR GRANTS.**—

“(1) **MAXIMUM AMOUNT.**—The amount of a grant awarded under this section may not exceed 80 percent of the administrative and planning expenses of the local development district receiving the grant.

“(2) **MAXIMUM PERIOD FOR STATE AGENCIES.**—In the case of a State agency certified as a local development district, a grant may not be awarded to the agency under this section for more than 3 fiscal years.

“(3) **LOCAL SHARE.**—The contributions of a local development district for administrative expenses may be in cash or in kind, fairly evaluated, including space, equipment, and services.

“(c) **DUTIES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS.**—A local development district shall—

“(1) operate as a lead organization serving multicounty areas in the region at the local level;

“(2) assist the Commission in carrying out outreach activities for local governments, community development groups, the business community, and the public;

“(3) serve as a liaison between State and local governments, nonprofit organizations (including community-based groups and educational institutions), the business community, and citizens; and

“(4) assist the individuals and entities described in paragraph (3) in identifying, assessing, and facilitating projects and programs to promote the economic development of the region.

“§ 15506. Supplements to Federal grant programs

“(a) **FINDING.**—Congress finds that certain States and local communities of the region, including local development districts, may be unable to take maximum advantage of Federal grant programs for which the States and communities are eligible because—

“(1) they lack the economic resources to provide the required matching share; or

“(2) there are insufficient funds available under the applicable Federal law with respect to a project to be carried out in the region.

“(b) **FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING.**—A Commission, with the approval of the Federal Cochairperson, may use amounts made available to carry out this subtitle—

“(1) for any part of the basic Federal contribution to projects or activities under the Federal grant programs authorized by Federal laws; and

“(2) to increase the Federal contribution to projects and activities under the programs above the fixed maximum part of the cost of the projects or activities otherwise authorized by the applicable law.

“(c) **CERTIFICATION REQUIRED.**—For a program, project, or activity for which any part of the basic Federal contribution to the project or activity under a Federal grant program is proposed to be made under subsection (b), the Federal contribution shall not be made until the responsible Federal official administering the Federal law authorizing the Federal contribution certifies that the program, project, or activity meets the applicable requirements of the Federal law and could be approved for Federal contribution under that law if amounts were available under the law for the program, project, or activity.

“(d) **LIMITATIONS IN OTHER LAWS INAPPLICABLE.**—Amounts provided pursuant to this subtitle are available without regard to any limitations on areas eligible for assistance or authorizations for appropriation in any other law.

“(e) **FEDERAL SHARE.**—The Federal share of the cost of a project or activity receiving assistance under this section shall not exceed 80 percent.

“(f) **MAXIMUM COMMISSION CONTRIBUTION.**—Section 15501(d), relating to limitations on Commission contributions, shall apply to a program, project, or activity receiving assistance under this section.

“CHAPTER 157—ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

“SUBCHAPTER I—GENERAL PROVISIONS

“Sec.

“15701. Consent of States.

“15702. Distressed counties and areas.

“15703. Counties eligible for assistance in more than one region.

“15704. Inspector General; records.

“15705. Biannual meetings of representatives of all Commissions.

“15706. Relationship to other laws.

“SUBCHAPTER II—DESIGNATION OF REGIONS

“15731. Delta Regional Commission.

“15732. Northern Great Plains Regional Commission.

“15733. Southeast Crescent Regional Commission.

“15734. Southwest Border Regional Commission.

“15735. Northern Border Regional Commission.

“SUBCHAPTER III—AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

“15751. Authorization of appropriations.

“SUBCHAPTER I—GENERAL PROVISIONS

“§ 15701. Consent of States

“This subtitle does not require a State to engage in or accept a program under this subtitle without its consent.

“§ 15702. Distressed counties and areas

“(a) **DESIGNATIONS.**—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this section, and

annually thereafter, each Commission shall make the following designations:

“(1) **DISTRESSED COUNTIES.**—The Commission shall designate as distressed counties those counties in its region that are the most severely and persistently economically distressed and underdeveloped and have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration.

“(2) **TRANSITIONAL COUNTIES.**—The Commission shall designate as transitional counties those counties in its region that are economically distressed and underdeveloped or have recently suffered high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration.

“(3) **ATTAINMENT COUNTIES.**—The Commission shall designate as attainment counties, those counties in its region that are not designated as distressed or transitional counties under this subsection.

“(4) **ISOLATED AREAS OF DISTRESS.**—The Commission shall designate as isolated areas of distress, areas located in counties designated as attainment counties under paragraph (3) that have high rates of poverty, unemployment, or outmigration.

“(b) **ALLOCATION.**—A Commission shall allocate at least 50 percent of the appropriations made available to the Commission to carry out this subtitle for programs and projects designed to serve the needs of distressed counties and isolated areas of distress in the region.

“(c) **ATTAINMENT COUNTIES.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in paragraph (2), funds may not be provided under this subtitle for a project located in a county designated as an attainment county under subsection (a).

“(2) **EXCEPTIONS.**—

“(A) **ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS.**—The funding prohibition under paragraph (1) shall not apply to grants to fund the administrative expenses of local development districts under section 15505.

“(B) **MULTICOUNTY AND OTHER PROJECTS.**—A Commission may waive the application of the funding prohibition under paragraph (1) with respect to—

“(i) a multicounty project that includes participation by an attainment county; and

“(ii) any other type of project, if a Commission determines that the project could bring significant benefits to areas of the region outside an attainment county.

“(3) **ISOLATED AREAS OF DISTRESS.**—For a designation of an isolated area of distress to be effective, the designation shall be supported—

“(A) by the most recent Federal data available; or

“(B) if no recent Federal data are available, by the most recent data available through the government of the State in which the isolated area of distress is located.

“§ 15703. Counties eligible for assistance in more than one region

“(a) **LIMITATION.**—A political subdivision of a State may not receive assistance under this subtitle in a fiscal year from more than one Commission.

“(b) **SELECTION OF COMMISSION.**—A political subdivision included in the region of more than one Commission shall select the Commission with which it will participate by notifying, in writing, the Federal Cochairperson and the appropriate State member of that Commission.

“(c) **CHANGES IN SELECTIONS.**—The selection of a Commission by a political subdivision shall apply in the fiscal year in which the selection is made, and shall apply in each subsequent fiscal year unless the political subdivision, at least 90 days before the first day of the fiscal year, notifies the Cochairpersons of another Commission in writing that the political subdivision will participate in that Commission and also transmits a copy of such notification to the Cochairpersons of the Commission in which the political subdivision is currently participating.

“(d) **INCLUSION OF APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION.**—In this section, the term ‘Commission’ includes the Appalachian Regional Commission established under chapter 143.

“§ 15704. Inspector General; records

“(a) **APPOINTMENT OF INSPECTOR GENERAL.**—There shall be an Inspector General for the Commissions appointed in accordance with section 3(a) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.). All of the Commissions shall be subject to a single Inspector General.

“(b) **RECORDS OF A COMMISSION.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—A Commission shall maintain accurate and complete records of all its transactions and activities.

“(2) **AVAILABILITY.**—All records of a Commission shall be available for audit and examination by the Inspector General (including authorized representatives of the Inspector General).

“(c) **RECORDS OF RECIPIENTS OF COMMISSION ASSISTANCE.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—A recipient of funds from a Commission under this subtitle shall maintain accurate and complete records of transactions and activities financed with the funds and report to the Commission on the transactions and activities.

“(2) **AVAILABILITY.**—All records required under paragraph (1) shall be available for audit by the Commission and the Inspector General (including authorized representatives of the Commission and the Inspector General).

“(d) **ANNUAL AUDIT.**—The Inspector General shall audit the activities, transactions, and records of each Commission on an annual basis.

“§ 15705. Biannual meetings of representatives of all Commissions

“(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Representatives of each Commission, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Denali Commission shall meet biannually to discuss issues confronting regions suffering from chronic and contiguous distress and successful strategies for promoting regional development.

“(b) **CHAIR OF MEETINGS.**—The chair of each meeting shall rotate among the Commissions, with the Appalachian Regional Commission to host the first meeting.

“§ 15706. Relationship to other laws

“Projects receiving assistance under this subtitle shall be treated in the manner provided in section 602 of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3212).

“SUBCHAPTER II—DESIGNATION OF REGIONS

“§ 15731. Delta Regional Commission

“The region of the Delta Regional Commission shall consist of the following political subdivisions:

“(1) **ALABAMA.**—The counties of Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Escambia, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Perry, Pickens, Russell, Sumter, Washington, and Wilcox in the State of Alabama.

“(2) **ARKANSAS.**—The counties of Arkansas, Ashley, Baxter, Bradley, Calhoun, Chicot, Clay, Cleveland, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Dallas, Desha, Drew, Fulton, Grant, Greene, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lee, Lincoln, Lonoke, Marion, Mississippi, Monroe, Ouachita, Phillips, Poinsett, Prairie, Pulaski, Randolph, St. Francis, Searcy, Sharp, Stone, Union, Van Buren, White, and Woodruff in the State of Arkansas.

“(3) **ILLINOIS.**—The counties of Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, White, and Williamson in the State of Illinois.

“(4) **KENTUCKY.**—The counties of Ballard, Caldwell, Calloway, Carlisle, Christian, Crittenden, Fulton, Graves, Henderson, Hickman, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Marshall, McCracken, McLean, Muhlenberg, Todd, Trigg, Union, and Webster in the State of Kentucky.

“(5) **LOUISIANA.**—The parishes of Acadia, Allen, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Bienville, Caldwell, Cameron, Catahoula, Claiborne, Concordia, E. Baton Rouge, DeSoto, E. Carroll, E. Feliciana, Evangeline, Franklin, Grant, Iberia, Iberville, Jackson, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafourche, LaSalle, Lincoln, Livingston, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Orleans, Ouachita, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Red River, Richland, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Tangipahoa, Tensas, Union, Vermilion, Washington, Webster, W. Baton Rouge, W. Carroll, W. Feliciana, and Winn in the State of Louisiana.

“(6) **MISSISSIPPI.**—The counties of Adams, Amite, Attala, Benton, Bolivar, Carroll, Claiborne, Coahoma, Copiah, Covington, DeSoto, Franklin, Grenada, Hinds, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Jasper, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lawrence, Leflore, Lincoln, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Montgomery, Panola, Pike, Quitman, Rankin, Sharkey, Simpson, Smith, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tippah, Tunica, Union, Walthall, Warren, Washington, Wilkinson, Yalobusha, and Yazoo in the State of Mississippi.

“(7) **MISSOURI.**—The counties Bollinger, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Crawford, Dent, Douglas, Dunklin, Howell, Iron, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Oregon, Ozark, Pemiscott, Perry, Phelps, Reynolds, Ripley, Ste. Genevieve, St. Francois, Scott, Shannon, Stoddard, Texas, Washington, Wayne, and Wright in the State of Missouri.

“(8) **TENNESSEE.**—The counties of Benton, Carroll, Chester, Crockett, Decatur, Dyer, Fayette, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Henry, Lake, Lauderdale, McNairy, Madison, Obion, Shelby, Tipton, and Weakley in the State of Tennessee.

“§ 15732. Northern Great Plains Regional Commission

“The region of the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission shall consist of the following:

“(1) All counties of the States of Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

“(2) The counties of Andrew, Atchison, Buchanan, Caldwell, Carroll, Chariton, Clay, Clinton, Cooper, Daviess, DeKalb, Gentry, Grundy, Harrison, Holt, Howard, Jackson, Linn, Livingston, Mercer, Nodaway, Platte, Putnam, Schuyler, Sullivan, and Worth in the State of Missouri.

“§ 15733. Southeast Crescent Regional Commission

“The region of the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission shall consist of all counties of the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida not already served by the Appalachian Regional Commission or the Delta Regional Commission.

“§ 15734. Southwest Border Regional Commission

“The region of the Southwest Border Regional Commission shall consist of the following political subdivisions:

“(1) **ARIZONA.**—The counties of Cochise, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Yuma in the State of Arizona.

“(2) **CALIFORNIA.**—The counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura in the State of California.

“(3) **NEW MEXICO.**—The counties of Catron, Chaves, Dona Ana, Eddy, Grant, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Luna, Otero, Sierra, and Socorro in the State of New Mexico.

“(4) **TEXAS.**—The counties of Atascosa, Bandera, Bee, Bexar, Brewster, Brooks, Cameron, Coke, Concho, Crane, Crockett, Culberson, Dimmit, Duval, Ector, Edwards, El Paso, Frio,

Gillespie, Glasscock, Hidalgo, Hudspeth, Irion, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Karnes, Kendall, Kennedy, Kerr, Kimble, Kinney, Kleberg, La Salle, Live Oak, Loving, Mason, Maverick, McMullen, Medina, Menard, Midland, Nueces, Pecos, Presidio, Reagan, Real, Reeves, San Patricio, Shleicher, Sutton, Starr, Sterling, Terrell, Tom Green Upton, Uvalde, Val Verde, Ward, Webb, Willacy, Wilson, Winkler, Zapata, and Zavala in the State of Texas.

“§ 15735. Northern Border Regional Commission

“The region of the Northern Border Regional Commission shall include the following counties:

“(1) **MAINE.**—The counties of Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington in the State of Maine.

“(2) **NEW HAMPSHIRE.**—The counties of Carroll, Coos, Grafton, and Sullivan in the State of New Hampshire.

“(3) **NEW YORK.**—The counties of Cayuga, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Oswego, Seneca, and St. Lawrence in the State of New York.

“(4) **VERMONT.**—The counties of Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, and Orleans in the State of Vermont.

“SUBCHAPTER III—AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

“§ 15751. Authorization of appropriations

“(a) **IN GENERAL.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to each Commission to carry out this subtitle—

“(1) \$40,000,000 for fiscal year 2008;

“(2) \$45,000,000 for fiscal year 2009;

“(3) \$50,000,000 for fiscal year 2010;

“(4) \$55,000,000 for fiscal year 2011; and

“(5) \$60,000,000 for fiscal year 2012.

“(b) **ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.**—Not more than 10 percent of the funds made available to a Commission in a fiscal year under this section may be used for administrative expenses.”

(b) **CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—The table of subtitles for chapter 40, United States Code, is amended by striking the item relating to subtitle V and inserting the following:

“V. REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT 15101
“VI. MISCELLANEOUS 17101”.

SEC. 4. CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.

(a) **REPEALS.**—Subtitles F and G of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 2009aa–2009bb–13) are repealed.

(b) **INSPECTOR GENERAL ACT.**—Section 11 of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1) by striking “or the President of the Export-Import Bank;” and inserting “the President of the Export-Import Bank; or the Federal Cochairpersons of the Commissions established under section 15301 of title 40, United States Code;”; and

(2) in paragraph (2) by striking “or the Export-Import Bank;” and inserting “the Export-Import Bank, or the Commissions established under section 15301 of title 40, United States Code.”.

SEC. 5. TRANSFERS OF AUTHORITY AND SAVINGS PROVISIONS.

(a) **TRANSFERS OF AUTHORITY.**—Subject to the requirements of this Act (including the amendments made by this Act)—

(1) all of the functions of the Delta Regional Authority are transferred to the Delta Regional Commission; and

(2) all of the functions of the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority are transferred to the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission.

(b) **LEGAL DOCUMENTS.**—All orders, determinations, rules, regulations, grants, loans, contracts, and agreements—

(1) that have been issued, made, granted, or allowed to become effective by the Delta Regional Authority or the Northern Great Plains

Regional Authority in the performance of any function that is transferred by this section, and

(2) that are in effect on the effective date of such transfer (or become effective after such date pursuant to their terms as in effect on such effective date),

shall continue in effect according to their terms until modified, terminated, superseded, set aside, or revoked in accordance with law by an authorized official, a court of competent jurisdiction, or operation of law.

(c) **TRANSFER OF ASSETS AND PERSONNEL.**—

(1) **DELTA REGIONAL COMMISSION.**—*There shall be transferred to the Delta Regional Commission such assets, funds, personnel, records, and other property of the Delta Regional Authority relating to the functions of the Authority as the Commission determines appropriate.*

(2) **NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION.**—*There shall be transferred to the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission such assets, funds, personnel, records, and other property of the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority as the Commission determines appropriate.*

SEC. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act, and the amendments made by this Act, shall take effect on the first day of the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GRAVES) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007 reauthorizes two existing commissions and establishes three new commissions. The two existing commissions, one, the Delta Regional Commission, was created through the appropriation process, and the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission was established some time ago, but we establish three new regional economic development commissions: The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, the Southwest Border Regional Commission, and the Northern Border Regional Commission.

The purpose of the regional commission approach to economic development is a recognition that economic difficulties don't stop at political dividing lines, county lines, State lines, that they transcend our political boundaries, that the economic development problems are grouped by region. By economy, if you will.

Some years ago, we had the Upper Great Lakes Regional Commission linking the upper peninsula of Michigan, the upper counties of Wisconsin and the northern tier of Minnesota. They had in common forestry, wood, wood fiber industries, fisheries, travel/tourism and Great Lakes ports connected to the international economy through the St. Lawrence Seaway. Projects conceived by the Upper Great Lakes Commission were to be linked to the commonality of regional economic difficulties the three States experienced. The same with Appalachia coal; the attendant difficulties of the coal sector of our economy stretched across State boundaries and linked the entire Appalachian region with their forestry

difficulties as well and also with their need for surface transportation development. That is the principle that is extended to the three new commissions, the Southeast Crescent, the Southwest Border and the Northern Border Commission.

The Delta Regional Commission is one that has unique problems, exacerbated and at the same time underscored by the tragedy of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma. All of the counties, or I should say most of the counties, and parishes in Louisiana, in that region suffered common economic problems. Creating an economic development structure on a regional basis will join the resources and the forces of these States, the counties and the parishes, to bring forth new ideas that will benefit not just one community, not just one parish, but a commonality of parishes, a commonality of counties and a commonality of the States.

In this legislation, we establish a structure, a common framework for administration and management modeled after the Appalachian Regional Commission but also modeled after the difficulties we experienced in previous regional economic development commissions in the sixties and seventies and early eighties. We need standard procedures. We need a voting structure. We need standard procedures for staffing, standards that establish conditions under which conflicts of interest can be evaluated and avoided. Commonality establishment of local economic development districts, a consistent method for distributing economic development funds, a uniform set of procedures that will apply to all of the commission, and, finally, with commonality then we can have uniform evaluation standards of the results of these commissions. And it will be the purpose of our Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to hold intensive oversight hearings as these commissions get under way with their work, they are funded, and we will want to hold them accountable, we will want to see their record of success, and I am quite confident, given the grassroots-up nature of establishment of planning and mission of these commissions, that there will be great success stories.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I would yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007 reauthorizes two economic development commissions, the Delta Regional Commission and the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission. The bill also creates three new commissions, the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, the Southwest Border Regional Commission and the Northern Border Regional Commission.

First, I want to thank Chairman OBERSTAR and Subcommittee Chairwoman NORTON for working with me to add several counties in northwest Mis-

souri to the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission and for working with other members of the committee to add their counties to the bill as well. I appreciate it very much.

The Northern Great Plains Regional Commission borders my district in the north and the west. The counties added by this bill are contiguous to the counties in the commission. Additionally, these northwest Missouri counties are experiencing problems similar to the counties in the commission already, yet they have higher levels of economic distress.

The Northern Great Plains Regional Commission will set the stage for economic growth by creating an effective Federal-State partnership for attracting new businesses, creating new jobs and developing the infrastructure in northwest Missouri. The commission will encourage local economic development by making use of local resources for the benefit of the community. The commission is designed to successfully leverage other public and private funds, providing northwest Missouri with a very valuable economic development tool.

Economic development plays a very vital role in maintaining our rural way of life by keeping folks in those communities and keeping that culture alive. A major component to economic development is the build-out of broadband services throughout many regions in the country.

□ 1230

No matter where you live, broadband can bring a world of opportunities and possibilities to your doorstep. It is imperative to our rural way of life that we push broadband out to every corner of the country. Where you live should not limit your opportunities for education, commerce, and medical care.

Many citizens in rural America's small communities do not have broadband access at a reasonable cost. It should be available to everyone no matter where they live at a reasonable rate. Through this legislation and other efforts that my colleagues and I have taken on, grants will be available to further establish an infrastructure that can support this important tool to rural economic development.

Additionally, I must commend two members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Mr. HAYES and Mr. BOUSTANY, who have been tireless advocates for their districts. I would like to recognize Mr. HAYES for his dedication to stimulating economic development and job promotion in the State of North Carolina and leading efforts to create the Southeast Crescent Authority.

Additionally, he has championed efforts to recruit new industry and create new jobs while sharpening the competitive proficiency of existing industries in the Eighth Congressional District of North Carolina.

Mr. BOUSTANY has also worked tirelessly to promote development and create opportunities for communities in

his district and has been a leader on the issue for the entire State of Louisiana.

Again, thank you, Chairman OBERSTAR and Chairwoman NORTON for working with Members and working with me to bring this legislation to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I know we have a few speakers out there, so I will cut mine short.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the very distinguished Chair of our Subcommittee on Economic Development and other subject matters, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia who presided over the hearings and whose steady hands shaped this legislation. I am greatly appreciative of her splendid work.

Ms. NORTON. I thank the chairman for yielding.

I understand the gentleman from Maine, who is a major sponsor of this bill, has a hearing. In deference to him, I will wait until after he finishes and yield my time at this time to him, if it is all right with the chairman.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I will then yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Maine.

Mr. MICHAUD. I thank the gentleman and the gentleman for yielding.

The Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007 represents a vision for economic development in our Nation that will help Americans in the most distressed regions of our country.

In the northern border region, we are seeing clearly persistent patterns of economic distress. If you look at the 36 counties that lie on the border or right next to the border between Maine and New York, you will find poverty above the national average, medium household income that is more than \$6,500 below the national average, persistent unemployment through layoffs in traditional manufacturing industries, and most striking of all, a meager gain of only 0.6 percent in population between 1990 and 2000, compared to the 13 percent growth nationally over the same period.

In short, Mr. Speaker, our mills are closing, our young people are leaving, and too many of our workers are looking for work. Clearly, this region has a common set of challenges and a compelling need for investment in new growth.

Two days after I was elected to Congress, the very mill that I worked at for over 28 years went bankrupt, and my hometown and region were devastated. The story of my town and the mill that I worked at has been repeated across our region. That is why we need to support our regional industries and build new job opportunities, and that is why we need the investment, leadership and focus in our regional economic development bill.

The Northern Border Commission would help the region invest in trans-

portation, health care, agriculture, broadband, and alternative energy. It can be a partner with businesses to maintain our industry and build a new industry cluster. It can help us create jobs in the long term.

We have all the ingredients we need to face our challenges head-on and make our region an economic engine. This new commission will help us make the fundamental changes for our future.

I want to once again thank the chairman and chairwoman for all their hard work on this bill. This bill is a new way to look at economic development in our Nation.

So with that, hopefully our colleagues will pass this bill.

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY). He has worked tirelessly for his district. And since, not so much Hurricane Katrina, but Hurricane Rita, which devastated his district, he has been working very hard to bring some economic development to his district.

I yield such time as he may consume for his remarks.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend, Mr. GRAVES, for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill. H.R. 3246 reauthorizes the Delta Regional Authority, which works to improve the life for residents in some of the most economically distressed areas in our country. Those parishes and counties served by the DRA have per capita incomes at or far below the national average, and poverty in the region runs nearly 55 percent higher than the national rate.

Since being created, DRA has worked to improve the economy in the delta and allowed these residents to achieve parity with the rest of the country. The key to DRA's success is its ability to foster partnerships throughout the region and to collaborate with local development districts and other Federal and State agencies to ensure maximum benefit from the dollars invested.

In fact, in an article published last year, the Economist noted: "It is creating, or helping to retain, 36,000 jobs, mostly in manufacturing, which will generate \$1 billion in salaries. It has also helped 23,000 families get running water and sewage."

In the aftermath, Mr. Speaker, of Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, the DRA took a leadership role in working to address many of the recovery issues facing our State of Louisiana.

I want to thank Chairman OBERSTAR, my good friend, and the leadership of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the staff, subcommittee Chairman GRAVES, my good friend, for working with me to ensure that several of the parishes in my district that were hit hardest by Hurricane Rita are included in the DRA.

Data provided by the Department of Commerce shows that these parishes are now among the most economically

distressed in our country, and recovery has been slow. I want to emphasize, though, that the people of southwest Louisiana are resilient, and we will rebuild and, in fact, we are rebuilding. This legislation will provide them with just yet another tool to facilitate growth and return to economic prosperity in the region.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill. Again, I thank Chairman OBERSTAR, the Democratic staff, Chairman GRAVES, Chairman MICA and our staff. I want to thank also my legislative director, Terry Fisk, for working with me on this very important piece of legislation.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I also want to express my great appreciation to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GRAVES) and admiration for the time that he devoted personally and committed to the hearings, both in the past Congress and in this Congress, and for his consolidation of the interests of the various Members on the Republican side. We really developed a very strong bipartisan initiative as a result of the gentleman's diligent efforts.

And to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY), who also worked within the Louisiana and Mississippi delegations, did extraordinary yeoman's work bringing disparate issues, interests and personalities together which have resulted in this successful initiative we have today.

I now yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I echo the comments of our chairman, especially as regards our ranking member, Mr. GRAVES, who worked closely with me on this bill to ensure its profoundly bipartisan nature as counties, regardless of part of the country, regardless of who represents them, were selected based on very objective and competitive criteria. I appreciate the bipartisan support that he helped round up and the bipartisan support of so many Members of Congress.

I'm going to ask that my full statement be in the RECORD, and say only a few words, first about the chairman. It needs to be mentioned where this all started. It started with the extraordinary chairman of the full committee decades ago, when he created the notion of a bill to address the most impoverished sections of the country, beginning with, of course, the classic one that everyone knows, Appalachia. All we're doing here is expanding on Mr. OBERSTAR's work.

I must say, so much that has happened in our committee is emblematic of his career. It will be hard to say what his signature bill is; but knowing him, I think he would probably want this bill to rise up among them because of who benefits, those who have least benefited from the most prosperous economy the world has ever known.

This bill is back here by popular demand, and I use that in the technical sense of the word. The subcommittee

was besieged by Members saying, We want commissions. How come we don't have a commission, and then coming forward with statistics to show that, under the definition of persistent poverty, they now qualified. It wasn't easy to get a commission or to get in this bill, with one of the counties included in this bill. We held hearings, and we used very objective criteria that you had to fit in order for us, after the hearings, after full study to say, yes, that county, among many in the United States that are suffering today, should have the special attention of a regional commission.

And we think, Mr. Speaker, that as the global economy has expanded throughout our country because of all the pressures, the natural pressures that come from that and from international trade, many came forward and wanted to be included as part of these commissions. But we held to the criteria set when the Oberstar bill was first passed: there had to be systemic poverty. And the region or the county, in order to be included, had to be clearly underdeveloped relative to what was possible. And so you had only two commissions, and then you have three added now.

When it comes to poverty, there is always controversy about what works. And this time we really know what works because this bill is patterned on the very successful, indeed the acclaimed, Appalachian Regional Commission. And the bill itself simply wants to make sure that administrative procedures and methods for distributing the economic development funds are uniform. When you consider that most of the funds that will flow to these regions far and away are private funds, one has to really look at this bill as a small public investment for enormous returns in private attraction and investment.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say just a word to extricate ourselves from the stereotypes about certain regions, like the northern border region which stretches from Maine to New York. We're talking about a region that some might consider in light of large cities in the region; but if you look as the commission methodology looks at counties in the region, you will understand why the northern border qualifies: few basic industries, overdependence in today's economy on agriculture, and 12.5 percent of the population living in poverty.

Or take the southeastern region of the United States, the Sunbelt, which everyone associates with economic growth, and well you might. But these are also the States which have historically most lagged behind the national economy.

And so we have regions in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. And the reason we have them, of course, is that on top of industrial and technological underdevelopment, this is the region in the United States that

has natural disasters at a rate of two or three times the rest of the country.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that, of all of the aspects of this bill, I think that which has been embraced most by our committee is the record of private investment in the region once we designate a commission and once it begins to operate.

□ 1245

It really does tell us much about the "blessing of the Federal Government" and the methodology used by this commission. It tells us much about the reputation of what these commissions have done.

I have been in Congress 16 years. I have seldom sat in hearings where people came forward not with criticisms but with glowing examples of how a specific approach to poverty in our country works. I therefore strongly recommend the bill. I commend all of those, of whom there are dozens, who had a hand in its design.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3246 amends title 40, United States Code, to provide a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely economically distressed regions in the Nation.

H.R. 3246 the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007, authorizes two existing commissions and three new regional economic development commissions under a common framework of administration and management, and further provides a framework for good decision making and planning. These Commissions are designed to address problems of systemic poverty and underdevelopment in their respective regions. The five commissions are: the Delta Regional Commission, the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission, the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, the Southwest Border Regional Commission, and the Northern Border Regional Commission.

This bill models the administrative and management procedures for these five Commissions after the highly successful Appalachian Regional Commission. The bill provides for a voting structure, provisions regarding staffing, conflicts of interest, local development districts, and other matters designed to produce a standard administrative framework. By providing a uniform set of procedures, this bill provides a consistent method for distributing economic development funds throughout the regions most in need of such assistance and ensures a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely distressed regions in the country.

The Northern Border Regional Commission, the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, and the Southwest Border Regional Commission have been proposed in legislation introduced in this and previous Congresses and are designed to address problems of systemic poverty and underdevelopment in those regions. Additional, the Delta Regional Commission and the Northern Great Plains Commission would be reauthorized through this legislation.

H.R. 3246 authorizes funds for each commission to provide vital assistance for the development of our Nation's most chronically poor and distressed regions.

I would like to say a few words about the uniqueness of each of the new commissions being authorized by this bill. The Southwest border region includes all counties within 150 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border. This region contains 11 counties in New Mexico, 65 counties in Texas, 10 counties in Arizona, and 7 counties in California for a combined population of approximately 29 million. According to research compiled by the Interagency Task Force on the Economic Development of the Southwest Border: 20 percent of the residents in this region of the nation live below the poverty level, unemployment rates often reach as high as five times the national unemployment rate, and a lack of adequate access to capital has created economic disparities and made it difficult for businesses to start up in the region.

The Northern border region stretching from Maine to New York, while abundant in natural resources and rich in potential, lags behind much of the Nation in its economic growth, and its people have not shared properly in the Nation's prosperity. The region's historic reliance on a few basic industries and agriculture has failed to provide a diverse enough economic base for vigorous, self-sustaining growth. In the belt of counties along the Northern border from Maine through New York, 12.5 percent of the population lives in poverty, median household income is more than \$6,500 below the national average, unemployment through layoffs in traditional manufacturing industries is persistent, and the population only grew by 0.6 percent between 1990 and 2000, while the U.S. population rose by 13.2 percent, showing significant out migration and loss of young people.

The southeastern portion of the United States, encompassing the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida, is an area which has seen poverty rates well above the national average coupled with record unemployment. The region has also experienced natural disasters at a rate of two to three times greater than any other region of the U.S. The SouthEast Crescent Authority (SECA) authorizes a local-state-federal partnership to lift citizens in this geographic area out of poverty and create jobs. With the federal allocation of funding, SECA seeks to funnel monies to programs which address one or more of the following criteria for community betterment: (1) infrastructure, (2) education and job training, (3) health care, (4) entrepreneurship, and (5) leadership development. Those communities with the greatest need will be targeted, and grants will be made according to the degree of distress.

This bill has broad bi-partisan support, and the Committee has held a series of hearings regarding the need for these economic development commissions.

I support the bill and urge the passage of H.R. 3246.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCINTYRE), a strong advocate for this legislation.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development

Act which provides a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely economically distressed part of our Nation.

This bill includes legislation that I have introduced in every Congress since the 107th Congress that will establish the Southeast Crescent Authority for Economic Development. This authority would cover the southeastern portion of the United States, including the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida, which have all seen poverty rates well above the national average coupled with record unemployment.

I would like to thank Chairman OBERSTAR and the ranking member, Mr. MICA, as well as the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development Chairwoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON and the ranking member, Mr. GRAVES, Mr. MICHAUD and Mr. HAYES and my other colleagues who together have worked with us in trying to help the most economically disadvantaged areas of our country. It is their compassion, cooperation and commitment that has brought us here today. I applaud all those who have worked together to help our areas of the country that have suffered so much. The southeastern U.S. has suffered a double whammy, the highest levels of poverty coupled with the highest levels of unemployment over the last several years.

As a Member that represents a district from one of the southern States that has experienced stagnation in job growth, I have seen firsthand the restructuring of the South's economy. Jobs in textile and furniture-making have decreased substantially. Although a more high-tech and globally competitive economy has created new opportunities for employment in the South, it also has meant that we have lost many jobs held by employees who have few prospects for shifting to other jobs with comparable pay. In addition, the seven States of the Southeast Crescent Authority region also have experienced natural disasters at a rate of two to three times greater than any other region in the United States, and this vulnerability to natural disasters further exacerbates the ability to recover from economic distress.

Modeled primarily after the successful Appalachian Regional Commission, the Southeast Crescent Authority would enjoin a local, State and Federal partnership to lift our citizens out of poverty and give them job opportunity.

The Southeast Crescent Authority would help communities by doing several things: improving infrastructure, giving the opportunity for education and job training, better health care, business entrepreneurship and leadership development. What is great about this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, is that those areas in the greatest need will be targeted. Those with the greatest need of economic distress will be helped.

It is time indeed to change the pattern of poverty and unemployment in the southeastern United States, the only major region of the country that has never had this type of Federal focus on economic development. We are excited that we are now able to help the least of these, our brothers and sisters, who have suffered enough and suffered so much. Now we can help bolster a better opportunity for economic progress and possibility. May God bless our efforts to help those who have suffered so much and now can see a life-changing difference in economic opportunity.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire how much time is remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Minnesota has 10½ minutes. The gentleman from Missouri has 24 minutes.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) and I yield myself 15 seconds to explain that, through a clerical error, unfortunately, I regret and I apologize to the gentleman, his name was not included in the cosponsors of the reintroduced bill or bill reported from the Rules Committee. I just want it known that the gentleman has, from the outset, been a vigorous supporter of this legislation. His name should have been listed as a cosponsor.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. I thank the gentleman from Minnesota for his leadership. I thank the Chair of the subcommittee, Ms. HOLMES NORTON, and I thank Mr. GRAVES for his good work.

Mr. Speaker, this commission is going to be very helpful to Vermont. We have in the northern tier of Vermont six counties, Caledonia, Grand Isle, Lamoille, Franklin, Orleans and Essex. It is among the most beautiful parts of Vermont. It has among the most industrious people in Vermont. But it has the highest unemployment rate and the lowest wages, about \$10,000 below the national median. We want economic development in our northern counties. This legislation is going to give that impetus that is going to allow our regional economic commissions that have been providing excellent leadership but on threadbare resources the opportunity to use local decisionmaking, local ingenuity and local people committed to a prosperous economy in that region to get a leg up.

What is tremendous about this legislation, modeled after its predecessors, is that it is a bottom-up approach. So if we have a proposal from folks in Caledonia County that broadband penetration is going to be what they need, or if we have folks in Franklin County who are going to do an agriculture-to-energy-related project, or something with dairy and that is what they need, they are going to have the opportunity for that to become a reality.

This is a situation where we actually have bottom-up leadership integrated into this legislation where the Federal Government here in Washington is

going to be a partner, not an impediment, to the goals, the aspirations, and the accomplishments of people back home. This bill is really about hope for the future. It is about confidence that local people in those counties in Vermont can make the best decision for themselves, and it is about Congress finally working as a partner with our local communities and local leadership.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. HODES), who has, Mr. Speaker, been a tireless advocate. He has worn me out, frankly, advocating for this commission.

Mr. HODES. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

First, I thank the distinguished chairman, Mr. OBERSTAR, and the distinguished subcommittee chairwoman, Ms. Eleanor Holmes Norton, as well as Mr. GRAVES for their work on this important bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill which includes the Northern Border Regional Development Commission. Parts of my home State of New Hampshire, Grafton, Sullivan and Carroll Counties, and especially in Coos County, the beautiful region known as the North Country, have taken an economic beating and are struggling to recover. A staggering number of jobs have been lost. We have seen manufacturing plants close, pulp plants disappear, and our young people leave to places that offer more opportunity.

New Hampshire's North Country has suffered repeated economic body blows. For people who live there, it is getting harder and harder to get by. As I travel throughout my State, I speak to hard-working folks who have the drive to improve their neighborhood but who feel their communities have been ignored by the Federal Government for years. The commissions created in this bill would be charged with investing Federal resources for economic development and job creation in the most distressed counties in New Hampshire and the ice belt region. I use the word "invest" purposely. New Hampshire is a very frugal State. We believe in small, effective Government. But we also know that a wise, effective Federal Government honors local control and invests wisely to promote opportunity and prosperity.

This commission employs a bottom-up grassroots approach that ensures that actions reflect both local needs and regional economic development goals. It also ensures that States have a deciding voice in what investment is made within their borders. The bill says that if you are willing to work hard and play by the rules, we are here to help you get ahead. That is why this bill enjoys such bipartisan support. It is an important step for many communities in New Hampshire.

Mr. Speaker, I urge its passage.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA).

Mr. HINOJOSA. Thank you, Chairman OBERSTAR, for yielding time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3246, the Regional Economic and Development Act of 2007.

The U.S.-Mexico border region's economic challenges are deeply entrenched and have been overlooked by national policymakers for far too long. Throughout my district, low incomes and high unemployment have translated into a stagnant and depressed local marketplace. Many colonias along the border lack adequate water supplies and paved roads while a shortage of investment and development has limited the economic opportunities of residents throughout that region.

In addition to current challenges, the border region's population is expanding very rapidly and straining our local infrastructure. Historically, Congress has confronted regional economic challenges by creating multi-State development commissions designed to coordinate local resources and encourage cooperation between Federal, State and local governments.

The Southwest Regional Border Commission included within this bill would represent a significant commitment by Congress to developing the economy of the Southwest. Because the challenges of this region cannot be isolated in any one city, county or State, the commission will work to stimulate the entirety of the area's economy by recognizing the connections between local economies and by coordinating the efforts of local officials.

By facilitating the provision of grants to States, local governments, universities, small businesses, and non-profit entities, the commission will plant the seeds of future economic growth throughout the region.

By expanding the transportation, public health facilities, wastewater treatment plants and telecommunications networks, these grants will provide the border region with the infrastructure it needs to meet its current needs while preparing for the strain of an expanding population.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when the mounting pressures of the global economy and income disparities are causing great economic distress in the border region, the Southwest Regional Border Authority has never been more needed. I urge my colleagues to support this critical legislation, H.R. 3246.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, does the gentleman from Missouri have any further speakers besides himself?

Mr. GRAVES. I don't. Just my own final words before the chairman closes.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR).

□ 1300

Mr. CUELLAR. I want to thank the distinguished Member from Minnesota for yielding. Again, I applaud the com-

mittee's tremendous work and the work of Chairman OBERSTAR for the leadership and vision that he has provided, along with Chairman REYES.

This bill creates the Southwest Border Region Commission and will positively impact the State of Texas. Eleven out of the 12 counties that I represent will be impacted in a positive way. These counties are struggling with common infrastructure needs that inhibit the community's ability to increase economic development. Some of these communities on the U.S.-Mexico border can be identified as colonias. As you know, colonias are found in Texas, New Mexico Arizona, and California, all States that will benefit from the establishment of the Southwest Border Regional Commission.

These colonias many times do not have paved roads, hospitals, or even utilities. Many colonias do not have sewage systems, forcing residents to rely on often inadequate wastewater disposal methods, such as small and outdated septic tanks. These conditions often result in sewage pooling on the ground. Even if these colonias do have adequate sewage systems, the border area lacks sufficient facilities to treat wastewater in this area.

Mr. Speaker, again, this Southwest Border Commission will provide the resources to help colonias and other underdeveloped regions to adequately address needs to be solved. By the establishment of this commission, this will address the basic needs that are needed in these areas. This is why I am asking the Members to support this bill.

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard now from folks talking about Louisiana, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, myself from Missouri; and I think folks can see that we have a lot of areas in the United States that are very economically distressed, and for various reasons. Every one of those regions, and, traditionally the Appalachia region, are distressed for different reasons. This bill allows these commissions to leverage public and private dollars. It is a great partnership.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the chairman for allowing me to add counties in northwest Missouri. It is very important to the folks there. I know he has been working on various aspects of these commissions for a long, long time. I appreciate his expertise and his willingness to be very open in this process and work with us.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, again, I express my great appreciation to Mr. MICA, the ranking member of the full committee, and especially to Mr. GRAVES, who devoted so much time to the hearings, to the diligent effort within the committee of shaping and crafting this bill.

In the matter of adding counties that were not in the original commissions'

proposals, we adhered to a very strict principle, that is, the additions had to conform with unemployment rate significantly above national average, per capita income rates that were significantly below national average rates, and out-migrations. In all cases, the counties recommended by the gentleman from Missouri, the parishes by the gentleman from Louisiana, and the gentleman from Mississippi all conformed when we got updated census information.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have here a splendid structure, one in which we can achieve accountability, one in which there already is success. In a report the committee received just this morning from the Delta Regional Commission on cumulative projects over the last year, the leveraging ratio is 16 to 1. That is for every \$1 the commission invested in projects within the region, \$16 additional in private sector and non-Federal funds have been invested. That is an extraordinary success ratio, and we want to ensure that that success will continue and will be extended to all of the commissions.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time and ask for a resounding affirmative vote for this legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SERRANO). All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 704, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MR. JORDAN OF OHIO

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman opposed to the bill?

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. I am in its current form.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Jordan of Ohio moves to recommit the bill H.R. 3246 to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure with instructions to report the same back to the House promptly with the following amendment:

At the end of the bill, add the following:

SEC. 7. LIMITATION ON THE USE OF FUNDS.

None of the funds authorized by this Act, including the amendments made by this Act, may be used—

- (1) to lobby or retain a lobbyist for the purpose of influencing a Federal, State, or local governmental entity or officer; or
- (2) to pay for expenses related to the membership of any individual or entity in an organization or association.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes in support of his motion.

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work of the chairman of the committee and the ranking member. The motion to recommit that we

have in front of us is an insurance policy. It will guarantee that no funds in the bill go to lobbyists or lobbying activities. This motion, in other words, is a step towards breaking that link between legislation and lobbyists.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3246, as we have heard from the language here on the floor today, is intended to aid the economic and infrastructure development in economically distressed regions of the country. Taxpayer dollars should be used for that purpose, and that purpose only.

The motion does two things: first, it prevents any of the funds authorized by this bill from being used to lobby or retain a lobbyist for the purposes of influencing a Federal, State or local government entity or officer. Second, the motion prohibits funds to pay for expenses related to the membership of an individual or entity in an organization or association.

Mr. Speaker, the majority promised in its opening-day rules package, section 202 of H. Res. 6, to end the K Street Project. This motion to recommit is policy that all Members should support. In fact, when this same language was offered to H.R. 569, the Water Quality Investment Act, it was approved by a 425-0 vote. That same act came out of this same committee, and the full House in unanimous fashion supported this same language.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this motion to recommit is an opportunity to improve the bill by adding explicit language to make sure that taxpayer dollars are used for their intended purpose.

Mr. Speaker, I would yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Minnesota is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, it is well known, has been debated many times in this body, that a motion to recommit that uses the term "promptly" is simply a motion to kill the bill by sending it back to committee, where it will take weeks to then return it to the House floor. Why an initiative to try to kill this legislation would be offered is puzzling to me, since there was no opposition to the legislation in subcommittee, full committee.

Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago when the bill was debated on the suspension calendar, no one rose in opposition to the bill. There was no opposition raised to the legislation this afternoon. So the motion to recommit on the merits of the term "promptly" is clearly an effort to send it back to committee, kill the bill.

But I point out, since the gentleman offering the motion referred to initiatives by the Democratic majority to have accountability, on page 17 of the bill, section 15-306, Personal Financial Interests, conflicts of interest, we address the issue of personal conflict of interest, of integrity of personnel em-

ployed by the commission in either the Federal co-chairman's office or the State co-chairman's office, and establish very clear obligations for reporting and excluding of such activity. Furthermore, under general Federal legislation, lobbying by a Federal Government agency of the Congress is not permitted.

So this is a non sequitur motion. It does not accomplish anything except the purpose of sending the bill back to committee and, in effect, killing it by delay. Again, I repeat, there was no opposition registered. When the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure considered this bill in subcommittee, in full committee markup, when it came to the floor under suspension of the rules, nor was there any opposition today, why there would be a motion of this nature to kill the bill is beyond me.

Furthermore, there are restraints, very explicit language on personal financial interest, conflict of interest not allowed; and, in general, Federal law, Federal agencies are prohibited from retaining a lobbyist, to pay expenses for lobbying.

Mr. Speaker, this is a transparent effort to try to kill the bill rather than deal with it on its merits. So I oppose the motion to recommit with instructions.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3246, the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007. As a cosponsor of this legislation, I was disappointed when the full House failed to adopt a motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 3246 on September 17. That said, I am pleased that the House is reconsidering the bill today.

As I have previously stated, H.R. 3246 is important to my constituents in Northern and Central New York because it would create the Northern Border Regional Commission to help further economic development. There is no question this assistance is needed. Specifically, in 2000, each of the counties I represent—Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Oswego, and St. Lawrence—had a median household income that was below the national median of \$41,994. Moreover, seven of these counties had poverty rates in excess of the national rate of 12.4 percent, and three, Franklin, Oswego and St. Lawrence counties, had poverty rates in excess of 14 percent. Similarly, from 2004 to 2006, 8 of these counties had unemployment rates in excess of the national average.

I greatly appreciate the efforts of the Gentleman from Maine, Mr. MICHAUD, to move this measure one step closer to enactment. Since the 108th Congress, we have been working to enact legislation to create a Northern Border Regional Commission, and I look forward to working with him further to do so.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3246, the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007.

This bill acknowledges a critical component of our country's success, and creates the Southwest Border Regional Commission for border counties in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas.

First, I thank the committee for the inclusion of this region in the bill. I am proud to represent this region, home to one of the most vibrant communities. Where the United States and Mexico meet, it is a symbiotic community. For cities in my district, there is often a division.

Many times on this house floor, the debate of the border is divisive and based on demagoguery. There is no room for those issues in today's debate. This commission is about investing in U.S. citizens that live in a unique community, a community that is the gateway to our country.

For as much as this Congress debates and exploits immigration and constantly works to militarize our border, we could spare some time to discuss needed investment in the region.

The residents of the southwest border are burdened with concerns that include low income, low education levels, the lowest number of health professionals, some of the highest rates of diabetes, tuberculosis, AIDS and other health crises, a lack of economic development, and the list goes on.

The southwest border communities are at the periphery of the United States and Mexico's national economic and political concerns. The U.S. Government has historically forgotten this community in terms of economic development, education and social programs.

The Southwest Border Regional Commission takes a great step to correct this misguided omission. It is our responsibility to assist our border communities and our border residents.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill and reject any attempts to further exploit the citizens who are at the gateway of this country and who sacrifice so much already to the demands of our border security.

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a cosponsor of this bill to provide a comprehensive, regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in areas that need it the most, including South Texas.

The Southwest Regional Border Authority helps areas along the U.S.-Mexican border, which have: a 20 percent poverty rate, unemployment rates much higher than the national rate, and a lack of capital to spur business growth.

This bill offers a significant investment for federal-state partnerships to help economically distressed and underdeveloped areas that have experienced high levels of unemployment, poverty, or population loss.

The bill provides an unprecedented amount of money to develop transportation and infrastructure, provide job skills training and support business development.

I am personally offended—as are my constituents in South Texas—that the only infrastructure Congress has approved along the border is a wall . . . a wall that won't work and that is entirely about political expediency, not border security.

Developing the South Texas infrastructure helps ensure that this region can support the trade that churns through the U.S. economy.

South Texas faces a host of challenges in terms of economic development and infrastructure to support trade all along the Southwest border—and the only way to tackle it is all together, not piecemeal.

I ask my colleagues to join me in passing this bill that is important to both the border region—and the Nation.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this legislation and urge my colleagues to oppose it.

I am a strong supporter of economic development in rural America. That is why I have been pressing for reform of the Universal Service Fund to bring the benefits of broadband telecommunications to the rural areas of the country. I also strongly support the programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and our State Department of Agriculture that promote economic growth in Nebraska.

But, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this bill. The State of Nebraska already participates in the existing Northern Great Plains Commission and the North Central BioEconomic Consortium. I am told by Nebraska's Deputy Director of Agriculture that there are even more of these organizations in the Midwest dedicated to the same goals. H.R. 3246 would just add one more entity to this existing number of economic development groups now in place.

Even more troubling is the \$1.25 billion price tag authorized by the bill and the creation of permanent regional commissions that will require millions of dollars in tax dollars for administrative expenses. We need to cut federal spending, not increase it.

Finally, the legislation also includes a provision requiring prevailing wages under the Davis-Bacon Act. For all of these reasons, I urge a "no" vote on this bill.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3246, the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007.

This bill provides the opportunity for many communities along the border to receive the assistance and resources they have long needed in order for them to develop their infrastructure and economic prospects.

Mr. Speaker, I represent an expansive district spanning from El Paso County in far west Texas, to Dimmitt County about 550 miles south and to South San Antonio about 150 miles west. This district encompasses the longest stretch of U.S.-Mexico border of any district in the United States.

These communities along the border lack some of the most basic infrastructure including sewers, roads and health care. These mostly rural communities along the border are often too poor to take advantage of government grants and loan programs. These cities, towns and counties don't have the revenue to provide local matching funds to qualify for federal grants and programs or have the tax base to build million-dollar waste water plants on their own.

A regional economic development commission on the southwest border, I believe will put the hundreds of small, rural border communities on the fast track to becoming self-sustaining and developing economically.

Mr. Speaker, a Southwest Border Regional Commission would essentially bring the federal government to the border. This bill will not raise taxes, will not create duplicative programs and certainly not provide any services to illegal or undocumented immigrants; this bill instead provides opportunity for our communities that are most in need.

I strongly urge my colleagues to pass this bipartisan bill.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, the Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the minimum time for any electronic vote on the question of passage.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 201, nays 218, not voting 13, as follows:

[Roll No. 945]

YEAS—201

Aderholt	Galleghy	Murphy, Tim
Akin	Garrett (NJ)	Musgrave
Alexander	Gerlach	Myrick
Altmire	Giffords	Neugebauer
Bachmann	Gilchrest	Nunes
Bachus	Gillibrand	Paul
Baker	Gingrey	Pearce
Barrow	Gohmert	Pence
Bartlett (MD)	Goode	Peterson (PA)
Barton (TX)	Goodlatte	Petri
Biggert	Granger	Pitts
Bilbray	Hall (TX)	Platts
Bilirakis	Hastert	Poe
Bishop (UT)	Hastings (WA)	Porter
Blackburn	Hayes	Price (GA)
Blunt	Heller	Putnam
Boehner	Hensarling	Radanovich
Bonner	Herger	Ramstad
Bono	Hill	Regula
Boozman	Hobson	Rehberg
Brady (TX)	Hoekstra	Reichert
Broun (GA)	Hulshof	Renzi
Brown (SC)	Hunter	Reynolds
Brown-Waite,	Inglis (SC)	Rogers (AL)
Ginny	Issa	Rogers (KY)
Buchanan	Johnson, Sam	Rogers (MI)
Burgess	Jones (NC)	Rohrabacher
Burton (IN)	Jordan	Ros-Lehtinen
Buyer	Keller	Roskam
Calvert	King (IA)	Royce
Camp (MI)	King (NY)	Ryan (WI)
Campbell (CA)	Kingston	Sali
Cannon	Kirk	Saxton
Cantor	Kline (MN)	Schmidt
Capito	Knollenberg	Sensenbrenner
Carter	Kuhl (NY)	Sessions
Castle	LaHood	Shadegg
Chabot	Lamborn	Shays
Coble	Lampson	Shimkus
Cole (OK)	Latham	Shuster
Conaway	Lewis (CA)	Simpson
Crenshaw	Lewis (KY)	Smith (NE)
Culberson	Linder	Smith (NJ)
Davis (KY)	LoBiondo	Smith (TX)
Davis, David	Lucas	Souder
Davis, Tom	Lungren, Daniel	Space
Deal (GA)	E.	Stearns
Dent	Mack	Tancredo
Diaz-Balart, L.	Mahoney (FL)	Terry
Diaz-Balart, M.	Manullo	Thornberry
Doolittle	Marchant	Tiahrt
Drake	Marshall	Tiberi
Dreier	McCarthy (CA)	Turner
Duncan	McCaul (TX)	Upton
Ehlers	McCotter	Walberg
Emerson	McCrery	Walden (OR)
English (PA)	McHenry	Walsh (NY)
Everett	McHugh	Wamp
Fallin	McKeon	Weldon (FL)
Feeney	McMorris	Weller
Ferguson	Rodgers	Westmoreland
Flake	McNerney	Whitfield
Forbes	Mica	Wicker
Fortenberry	Miller (FL)	Wilson (NM)
Fossella	Miller (MI)	Wilson (SC)
Fox	Miller, Gary	Wolf
Franks (AZ)	Mitchell	Young (AK)
Frelinghuysen	Moran (KS)	Young (FL)

NAYS—218

Abercrombie	Arcuri	Bean
Ackerman	Baca	Becerra
Allen	Baird	Berkley
Andrews	Baldwin	Berman

Berry	Hinchey	Pallone
Bishop (GA)	Hinojosa	Pascarell
Bishop (NY)	Hirono	Pastor
Blumenauer	Hodes	Payne
Boren	Holden	Peterson (MN)
Boswell	Holt	Pomeroy
Boucher	Honda	Price (NC)
Boustany	Hooley	Rahall
Boyd (FL)	Hoyer	Rangel
Boyd (KS)	Inslee	Reyes
Brady (PA)	Israel	Richardson
Braley (IA)	Jackson (IL)	Rodriguez
Brown, Corrine	Jackson-Lee	Ross
Butterfield	(TX)	Rothman
Capps	Jefferson	Roybal-Allard
Capuano	Johnson (GA)	Ruppersberger
Cardoza	Johnson (IL)	Rush
Carnahan	Johnson, E. B.	Ryan (OH)
Carney	Jones (OH)	Salazar
Castor	Kagen	Sánchez, Linda
Chandler	Kanjorski	T.
Clarke	Kaptur	Sanchez, Loretta
Clay	Kennedy	Sarbanes
Cleaver	Kildee	Schakowsky
Clyburn	Kilpatrick	Schiff
Cohen	Kind	Schwartz
Conyers	Klein (FL)	Scott (GA)
Cooper	Kucinich	Scott (VA)
Costa	Langevin	Serrano
Costello	Lantos	Sestak
Courtney	Larsen (WA)	Shea-Porter
Cramer	Larson (CT)	Sherman
Crowley	LaTourette	Shuler
Cuellar	Levin	Sires
Cummings	Lewis (GA)	Skelton
Davis (AL)	Lipinski	Slaughter
Davis (CA)	Loeb sack	Smith (WA)
Davis (IL)	Lofgren, Zoe	Snyder
Davis, Lincoln	Lowey	Solis
DeFazio	Lynch	Spratt
DeGette	Maloney (NY)	Stark
DeLauro	Markey	Stupak
Dicks	Matheson	Sutton
Doggett	Matsui	Tanner
Donnelly	McCarthy (NY)	Tauscher
Doyle	McCollum (MN)	Taylor
Edwards	McDermott	Thompson (CA)
Ellison	McGovern	Thompson (MS)
Ellsworth	McIntyre	Tierney
Emanuel	McNulty	Towns
Engel	Meek (FL)	Udall (CO)
Eshoo	Meeks (NY)	Udall (NM)
Etheridge	Melancon	Van Hollen
Farr	Michaud	Velázquez
Fattah	Miller (NC)	Walz (MN)
Filner	Miller, George	Wasserman
Frank (MA)	Mollohan	Schultz
Gonzalez	Moore (KS)	Waters
Gordon	Moore (WI)	Watson
Graves	Moran (VA)	Watt
Green, Al	Murphy (CT)	Waxman
Green, Gene	Murphy, Patrick	Weiner
Grijalva	Murtha	Welch (VT)
Gutierrez	Nadler	Wexler
Hall (NY)	Napolitano	Wilson (OH)
Hare	Neal (MA)	Woolsey
Harman	Oberstar	Wu
Hastings (FL)	Obey	Wynn
Hereth Sandlin	Olver	Yarmuth
Higgins	Ortiz	

NOT VOTING—13

Barrett (SC)	Dingell	Pryce (OH)
Carson	Jindal	Sullivan
Cubin	Lee	Visclosky
Davis, Jo Ann	Perlmutter	
Delahunt	Pickering	

□ 1337

Mr. KAGEN, Mr. COOPER, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Ms. WOOLSEY and Mr. MEEK of Florida changed their vote from "yea" to "nay."

Messrs. PAUL, HASTERT, FORBES, MAHONEY of Florida and Mrs. DRAKE changed their vote from "nay" to "yea."

So the motion to recommit was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 264, nays 154, not voting 14, as follows:

[Roll No. 946]

YEAS—264

Abercrombie	Ferguson	Meeks (NY)
Ackerman	Filner	Melancon
Aderholt	Fortenberry	Michaud
Alexander	Frank (MA)	Miller (NC)
Allen	Gerlach	Miller, George
Altmire	Giffords	Mitchell
Andrews	Gilchrest	Mollohan
Arcuri	Gillibrand	Moore (KS)
Baca	Gonzalez	Moore (WI)
Bachus	Gordon	Moran (VA)
Baird	Graves	Murphy (CT)
Baker	Green, Al	Murphy, Patrick
Baldwin	Green, Gene	Murphy, Tim
Barrow	Grijalva	Murtha
Bean	Gutierrez	Myrick
Becerra	Hall (NY)	Nadler
Berkley	Hare	Napolitano
Berman	Harman	Neal (MA)
Berry	Hastings (FL)	Oberstar
Bishop (GA)	Hayes	Obey
Bishop (NY)	Herseth Sandlin	Olver
Blackburn	Higgins	Ortiz
Blumenauer	Hill	Pallone
Boozman	Hinchee	Pascarell
Boren	Hinojosa	Pastor
Boswell	Hirono	Payne
Boucher	Hodes	Peterson (MN)
Boustany	Holden	Peterson (PA)
Boyd (FL)	Holt	Pomeroy
Boyd (KS)	Honda	Price (NC)
Brady (PA)	Hooley	Rahall
Braley (IA)	Hoyer	Rangel
Brown, Corrine	Inslee	Rehberg
Buchanan	Israel	Renzi
Butterfield	Jackson (IL)	Reyes
Capito	Jackson-Lee	Reynolds
Capps	(TX)	Richardson
Capuano	Jefferson	Rodriguez
Cardoza	Johnson (GA)	Rogers (AL)
Carnahan	Johnson (IL)	Ross
Carney	Johnson, E. B.	Rothman
Castor	Jones (NC)	Roybal-Allard
Chandler	Jones (OH)	Ruppersberger
Clarke	Kagen	Rush
Clay	Kanjorski	Ryan (OH)
Cleaver	Kaptur	Salazar
Clyburn	Kennedy	Sanchez, Linda
Coble	Kildee	T.
Cohen	Kilpatrick	Sanchez, Loretta
Conyers	Kind	Sarbanes
Cooper	Klein (FL)	Schakowsky
Costa	Kucinich	Schiff
Costello	Kuhl (NY)	Schwartz
Courtney	Lampson	Scott (GA)
Cramer	Langevin	Scott (VA)
Crowley	Lantos	Serrano
Cuellar	Larsen (WA)	Sestak
Cummings	Larson (CT)	Shea-Porter
Davis (AL)	LaTourette	Sherman
Davis (CA)	Levin	Shimkus
Davis (IL)	Lewis (GA)	Shuler
Davis, Lincoln	Lipinski	Sires
DeFazio	Loeb	Skelton
DeGette	Loftgren, Zoe	Slaughter
DeLauro	Lowey	Smith (NJ)
Dent	Lynch	Smith (TX)
Dicks	Mahoney (FL)	Smith (WA)
Doggett	Maloney (NY)	Snyder
Donnelly	Markey	Solis
Doyle	Marshall	Space
Drake	Matheson	Spratt
Edwards	Matsui	Stark
Ellison	McCarthy (NY)	Stupak
Ellsworth	McCollum (MN)	Sutton
Emanuel	McCrery	Tanner
Emerson	McDermott	Tauscher
Engel	McGovern	Taylor
English (PA)	McHugh	Thompson (CA)
Eshoo	McIntyre	Thompson (MS)
Etheridge	McNerney	Tierney
Farr	McNulty	Towns
Fattah	Meek (FL)	Udall (CO)

Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wasserman
Schultz

Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Weller

Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (AK)

NAYS—154

Akin
Bachmann
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Blibray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Brady (TX)
Broun (GA)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite,
Ginny
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Everett
Fallin
Flake
Forbes
Fossella
Foxy
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gingrey

NOT VOTING—14

Barrett (SC)
Carson
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Delahunt
Dingell
Feeney
Jindal
Lee
Perlmutter

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised there are 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 1346

Mrs. DRAKE changed her vote from “nay” to “yea.”

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 3222. An act making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendment to the bill (H.R. 3222) “An Act making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes,” requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. INOUE, Mr. BYRD, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. KOHL, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. BOND, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. GREGG, and Mrs. HUTCHISON, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

The message also announced that the Senate has agreed to a concurrent resolution of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 49. Concurrent resolution providing for a conditional adjournment or recess of the Senate.

PROVIDING FOR A CONDITIONAL ADJOURNMENT OR RECESS OF THE SENATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair lays before the House a privileged Senate concurrent resolution.

The Clerk read the Senate concurrent resolution, as follows:

S. CON. RES. 49

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring). That when the Senate recesses or adjourns on Thursday, October 4, 2007, or Friday, October 5, 2007, on a motion offered pursuant to this concurrent resolution by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand recessed or adjourned until 12 noon on Monday, October 15, 2007, or such other time on that day as may be specified by its Majority Leader or his designee in the motion to recess or adjourn, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 2 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first.

SEC. 2. The Majority Leader of the Senate, after consultation with the Minority Leader of the Senate, shall notify the Members of the Senate to reassemble at such place and time as he may designate if, in his opinion, the public interest shall warrant it.

The Senate concurrent resolution was concurred in.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MORTGAGE FORGIVENESS DEBT RELIEF ACT OF 2007

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 703, I call up the bill (H.R. 3648) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude discharges of indebtedness on principal residences from gross income, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3648

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,